

**"Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out": The Haight Ashbury Subcultural Lifestyle and  
Music - Modeling the Counterculture**

**By Monica Liberg**

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## **PREFACE**

### *The Long and Winding Road*

I was 15 years old and my main plan for the future was to be a shop manager. At this point I did not know anything about the opportunities university studies presented. I only knew I enjoyed working as a shop assistant and could see myself doing that also in the future. Thankfully, despite being young and inexperienced, I was information seeking. With the help from my upper-secondary school teacher I found that something called “university admission certification” was important, which I would not get if I applied shop assistant studies. Thanks to good advice, I chose general studies instead. This was the beginning of a long and winding road towards university studies and I soon found that a career as shop manager was perhaps not the way for me to go.

I am very grateful to my first love Håkon and his family for making me aware of the world of scholarly studies. Early on he told me about his plans of going to the University of Oslo to study literature. His enthusiasm made me want to find out more about the various fields of studies at the university. As the story goes, Håkon’s father was a wise and educated man, with a master degree of English. Conversations with him made me even more interested, especially when I learnt that English was a subject of study on its own.

My original plans of working as a shop manager soon became a faded image of a young girl not knowing the wide scope of study possibilities out there.

My fascination for the 1960s started with my mum’s old Beatles cassettes and only grew with the discovery of other bands and the colorful culture associated with the music. Being able to study music, which is perhaps my greatest hobby, has been a grateful task, yet at times very demanding. I have experienced more writing this thesis than words can describe, and I am proud.

So here I am, on the threshold of working as a teacher and happy as can be.

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First of all, I would like to give a special thanks to Håkon and Nils Christian Nilsen for leading me to university studies, studies that have kept me engaged the last 7 years.

I would also like to thank Deborah Kitchen for very useful guidance and for advising me to apply for the scholarship granted by IBA. Luckily, I was granted the scholarship which enabled me to travel to San Francisco collecting valuable source material for my thesis work. Furthermore, walking down the streets of Haight Ashbury, the place everything started, was of great inspiration to me.

I am very grateful to Jorma Kaukonen, Steven Palmer, Country Joe and “Bear”, for providing me with first hand information and thoughts from their lives back in the 1960s. Regular email correspondence with you guys has enriched my thesis and answered many of my questions.

I will also like to thank Nina Koren for making such a great front page and helping me with trusted readers of my thesis. You are a true friend. Thank you Elisabeth and Anita Koren for good advice both grammatically and content wise.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The 1960s was a decade of engagement, uproar, frustration and happiness. More than anything, it was the decade of blossoming youths. Whether dealt with year by year, or as one homogenous period, whatever one's attitude to the hippies, the multifaceted decade has engaged scholars ever since. Psychedelic rock music, the very anthem of the 1960s youth culture, flooded the air and defined a generation born soon after World War 2, later to be called "the baby boom generation." Music became a force of cohesion and functioned as the counterculture's collective voice against the conventions of the Establishment. The distinct music originating in San Francisco expressed the quest of the rebelling minority of the baby boom generation for an alteration of outdated American mores. The 1960s live on through the music, the arts, and an ever so colorful fashion, inspirational even today, more than 30 years later.

The old Victorian neighborhood in San Francisco, Haight Ashbury, provided young artists, former beatniks and musicians with cheap rents and gathered a wide range of people who ended up creating a special community. A distinct subculture developed in San Francisco during the first half of the 1960s which initiated the beginning of a popular culture that spread all over the world. The subculture served as a model for the counterculture starting in 1967. Thanks to a vast coverage by the mass media and the arranging of the Monterey International Pop Festival, the area had by the summer of 1967 been transformed from a locally known subculture into a cultural and musical epicenter and a counterculture. The San Francisco Sound is only one result of the creative and individualistic work by people in the Haight Ashbury area.

An essential aim of this thesis is to come to terms with how and why the cultural flowering of the Haight Ashbury infiltrated the popular culture of the 1960s, and defined a generation through their lifestyle. I will discuss why the Haight Ashbury subculture attracted so many young people and how this can be seen in relation to American individualism. This will be explained through the concept of traditional American individualism and young peoples' reaction to it in the shape of expressive individualism. A minority of American middle class youths chose to drop out of school as a protest against the conformity and traditional individualism which they felt penetrated American society.

The dismissal the parent generation's mores are reflected in the development of the Haight Ashbury inhabitants' lifestyle, most clearly from about 1965 until 1967, and the youth flocking to the area from the summer of 1967. The bohemians' lifestyle was seen as radical by many in contemporary America, and for this very reason it attracted young dropouts. The lifestyle covered music, fashion, arts and a strong emphasis on community, together with an added focus on the individual. It was a way of life counter to all that what was seen as standardized and common to the dominant culture of American society. By the summer of 1967 it was apparent that many baby boomers had adopted this lifestyle too, thus also the term *counterculture*.

In this thesis, the counterculture of the 1960s will be seen as an outburst of traditional American individualism incorporated in a lifestyle valuing community, while giving an opportunity for people to act highly individualistically. This turn of American individualism was a driving force behind why many young people decided to drop out of school and to live as what the media termed "hippies". The emphasis on community and

communal values, versus the notion of “doing one’s own thing”, is one of the many contradictions of the counterculture.

In the discussion of the individualism some baby boomers adopted, focus will be on the strain that scholars on American individualism have called “expressive” individualism. The young dropouts sought a collective approach to change American society, at the same time as they sought to find their true self outside the boundaries of American conformist society. They could only find their identity by changing the set of values they saw as too materialistically and capitalistically oriented for them to adjust to. A silent acceptance of the dominant American way of thought and life was by many young people perceived as an entrapment to personal individualism.

The exceedingly ambiguous relationship between white middle class runaways and college dropouts and big business proved to cultivate a relationship of mutual dependence and exploitation. In the 1960s, America for the first time experienced a noticeable youth culture. Big business in the shape of fashion and music found their ways to saturate and profit from the young and wealthy generation. Even several of the original Haight Ashbury inhabitants, acting as role models for the later to-come hippies, could not help taking advantage of the sudden popularity of their lifestyle. Popular culture and big business are closely related, and it will be attempted to show that subcultures are perhaps the biggest trendsetters for something to become popular culture, and that the change from subculture to popular culture also changed the ideology of the Haight Ashbury culture. The original Haight Ashbury inhabitants are throughout referred to as “bohemians” or “insiders” within the subculture. The dropouts of the baby boom



generation are referred to as “hippies” and “outsiders”, responsible for transforming the subculture to popular culture.

Until the summer of 1967, the inhabitants of Haight Ashbury constituted only a locally known subculture. Because of numerous of events in the period from between 1965 and 1967, the subculture grew in numbers and had by the summer of 1967 become a counterculture. The people behind the subculture mostly withdrew when the mass media discovered what went on in the San Francisco neighborhood. Those who had moved to Haight Ashbury in the early 1960s saw their lifestyle growing into a fad with the streets full of youths, drugs, dirt and a growing crime rate. Most of the bohemians, some of them with roots in the 1950s’ Beat generation and some in folk music, soon realized that an idealistic life based on community, love and sharing was difficult to combine with work and family in the long run. Moreover, they did not want to be related to the naïve young hippies arriving to San Francisco.

The year 1967 also marks an end for the San Francisco bands as merely locally acknowledged, poor musicians, as they were about to shake hands with big business. The Haight Ashbury subculture had ended up an inspiration source as well as producer of popular culture for the baby boom generation. The subculture that originally valued community and despised materialism and capitalism, lost its idealistic touch to the powerful nexus called big business the very moment it grew into a counterculture. The Monterey International Pop Festival in June 1967 marks an end to the Haight Ashbury community as a subculture. Many scholars see this event as the beginning of the counterculture.

This thesis will present another view concerning the counterculture and its members, seeing it as a short-lasting period and a commercialized version of the original Haight Ashbury culture, with the music festival as the essential dividing line. The Monterey International Pop Festival will be seen as an essential turning point in the process from subculture to popular culture, and the young members of the counterculture as the largest consumers of everything the Haight Ashbury culture had created, thereby turning the insiders' lifestyle into products. Commercialization of the Haight Ashbury subculture transformed the lifestyle of a few into popular culture and simultaneously changed both its individualistic strains and its contents.

### **1.1 Historical debate, sources and methods**

The discussion in the following is mainly seen through articles in sources such as the underground newspaper *the San Francisco Oracle*, *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *the New York Times*, and email interviews with some of the essential figures of the 1960s. Thoughts of people living in Haight Ashbury at the time, and reports given in articles, weigh more than much scholarly work on the San Francisco scene and music. Contemporary writing and footage captures the *Zeitgeist* of the time better than any scholar can present. Besides, such primary sources give, along with thoughts from those who were important forces behind the original subculture, an unbiased version for a scholar to interpret. The scholarly work used throughout has functioned as backing or as questioning of the primary sources.

A counterculture is intertwined with what often ends up as popular culture. Subcultures, as this study will show, are often major trendsetters behind a popular culture

which benefit the fashion and music industry to a greater or lesser degree. There is much written work, and many scholarly traditions concerning music and popular culture, and only the leading scholars in the field will be presented to emphasize what is generally seen as challenges.

Scholars, who write about the social, political and cultural history of the 1960s, are generally writing from a conservative or a radical viewpoint. In their work they omit the discussion of defining “popular” and “culture”, which are left for the cultural theorists to deal with. The conservative view seems to be more restricted to be willing to see the 1960s in positive terms and generally depicts the decade as a period of social decline. The radical view sees the flaws, but is more justifying of the social uproar of the decade than the former. It sees the radical youths of the 1960s as taking a long-awaited resolution with the conservative individualism of America. Cultural theorist and professor in sociology, Stuart Hall, born 1932 in Jamaica, is among the early contributors to the interpretation of the 1960s in America, and a leading figure of cultural studies.

His paper, “Hippies; an American Moment”, dates back to 1967 but was revised and expanded in 1968. The short, mimeographed paper that explored the hippie ethos and lifestyle is included in any large bibliography on the counterculture. At the time the paper was written, Hall was in his mid-thirties and well anchored within the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. He was concerned about the African-Americans’ role within the counterculture, and somewhat ambiguous towards the counterculture as a movement.

The work captures the moment in 1967 when the hippies were becoming visible because of growing media attention towards the Haight Ashbury area. Hall argues that “the hippie ambience has come to constitute, vis-à-vis youth culture, something of the

force of a conscious avant-garde.”<sup>1</sup> Further, he argues that “the hippie style is brought more directly into play in the radical and political arena.”<sup>2</sup> He makes a point of how the hippies had their “moment” around the summer of 1967 when they actually formed a distinct grouping outside American society. Moreover, the moment was of short duration as the hippie lifestyle became part of the wider youth culture and the Yippies emerged. He is eager to distinguish between those who dropped out of school, from what he calls “the commonplace routines of their generation” and the students who refused to do military service in Vietnam and thus dropped out as an act of political withdrawal. He suggests that there is an “element of withdrawal and dissociation from the more overtly political, and an element of retreatism [sic.], in the emergence of the Hippies at one particular ‘moment’ in the generational underground”.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, Hall predicts that the hippies in their present form are doomed to disappear, as he sees their role as paradoxical and contradictory. He argues, “Many of their characteristic modes of life seem adaptive to the system, rather than a surpassing of it”.<sup>4</sup> Although preaching the gospel of community and sharing, the hippie’s real cause of rebellion remains at the personal level against the American “system”. Hall uses a Hegelian term, “negation to the negation” to describe what he believes the hippies “inhabit, embody and become”.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the hippie way of life, in Hall’s opinion, mirrors the active part of the protesters’ resent and anger, but they are unable to speak it

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, *Hippies An American Moment*, 1968, p 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p 27.

because “the Hippie way of life is a broken refraction of the so-far absent or missing ‘content’ of the emergent revolutionary project”.<sup>6</sup> Hall also draws the link between beat generation and the hippies, seeing the beats as the hippies’ progenitors.<sup>7</sup> The movements both evolved as protests against the mores and modes of middle class America, saw great fascination in mysticism of oriental religion and were heavily into drugs.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the beats enacted a silent protest through writing fiction and poetry, drugs, jazz and a restless lifestyle, hippies expressed themselves through an expressive lifestyle rather than writing. As Hall argues, “what the existence of the Beats and the Hippies reminds us is that there has been a ceaseless dialectic at work in the growth of this ‘generational underground’ in the United States” and they are prototypes of “an expressive social movement”.<sup>9</sup> Hall also brings up the perhaps biggest difference between the two movements. The African American, or “Negro” as was a common term then, was a model of cool to the beatniks. The African American was hardly seen during the counterculture that saw the Native American as its mythical figure. Although being surrounded by “largely black slum,” the hippies of San Francisco were by and large white.<sup>10</sup>

The first major discussion of the American counterculture is the American social critic Professor Theodore Roszak’s *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* from 1969. Like his mentor Lewis Mumford, Roszak combines political and cultural criticism with an overall “critique of

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<sup>6</sup> Hall, p 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p 20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p 7.

technology and technological society.”<sup>11</sup> Mumford criticized the contradiction of the younger generation in the following manner:

*Their very mode of rebellion too often demonstrates that the power system still has them in its grip: they, too, mistake indolence for leisure and irresponsibility for liberation.*<sup>12</sup>

The way of spending leisure among many of the baby boom generation proved to nurture big business, though most hippies did not recognize the contradictory position in which this left them. In a similar mode Roszak criticize consumer society and the military-industrial complex he argues that it supports, the increasing concentration of populations in ungovernable cities, and “the technocratic and bureaucratic mentality that views such dilemmas as essentially technical problems with technical or scientific solutions”.<sup>13</sup>

Roszak is highly critical of this rationalist point-of-view and maintains that modern society should attempt to recover and return to “a sense of the sacred and mysterious dimensions of human life”.<sup>14</sup> Roszak found common ground between student radicals and hippie dropouts in their mutual rejection of what he calls the “technocracy”, the regime of corporate and technological expertise that dominates industrial society. Like Hall, he makes a distinction between student dropouts and political dropouts.

Timothy Miller in his book *Hippies and American Values*, published in 1991, also argues that there has to be made a distinction between the New Left and the hippies, even

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<sup>11</sup> Terence Ball “Theodore Roszak American Social Critic,” 18 January 2006, <http://www.bookrags.com/sciences/biology/theodore-roszak-1933--american-soci-enve-02.html> , read April 4, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine the Pentagon of Power*, 1964, p 340.

<sup>13</sup> Terence Ball “Theodore Roszak American Social Critic”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

though they had the same basic values: “They both manifested a sharp discontent with American society and its decadent hypocrisy”.<sup>15</sup> The basic difference was that the hippies were not politically active and did not do much to change society as a whole, while the more politically active groupings held sit-ins and protest marches to highlight their points and refused their military duties.

The writers of *Imagine Nation*, from 2002, point out that it may be useful to think historically of the counterculture of the 1960s as two major phases. The first phase was the “flower children period” that was dominated by white youth with a utopian worldview that started about 1964/1965.<sup>16</sup> The other phase began as the first phase was fading away, after the Summer of Love in 1967 and Nixon’s election in 1968, and is recognized by college educated and “post scarcity oriented” hippies, many of whom “felt it would be easier to transcend capitalism than destroy it”.<sup>17</sup> This second phase overlaps the first phase and ends in the early 1970s when the hippies eventually saw that “the political system was real and hostile, and it wouldn’t be eclipsed or rendered irrelevant by a beneficent, liberating economy”.<sup>18</sup>

The problem with historicizing the counterculture, the way Braunstein et al. see it, is that

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy Miller, *Hippies and American Values*, 1991, p 10.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Braunstein et al., *Imagine Nation*, 2002, p 11.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p 13.

*countercultural knowledge can't be accurately represented by a straight line... Yet by disciplinary convention, historical accounts are linear, chronological and teleological.*<sup>19</sup>

According to Braunstein et al., the term “counterculture” falsely reifies something that in the first place should not be interpreted as a social movement only, since it was an unstable collection of “attitudes, tendencies, postures, gestures, ‘lifestyles,’ ideals, visions, hedonistic pleasures, moralisms, negations and affirmations”.<sup>20</sup> By identifying a decade through terms as “hippies,” “counterculture” and “flower-power era,” several aspects are left out, and the scholarly focus can easily find itself caught by definitions and terms.

One scholar who has been more critical towards the counterculture as a social movement is Allen Matusow in *the Unraveling of America*, published in 1984. Unlike Hall and Roszak, he is anchored in the liberal tradition, writing from a conservative point of view. The book sees the 1960s as a period of social decline and portrays the hippies in a similar mode. He locates the failure of American liberalism in the 1960s by highlighting the gloomy outcome of the counterculture the way he sees it. Writing about the San Francisco hippies, he generalizes them into stereotypes as “freaks” who were not interested in anything but the “creation of Dionysian art”.<sup>21</sup> He writes with a critical eye and reduces the counterculture to a drug-induced homogenous movement and does not see any differences before and after its commodification. The notion of the hippies as nothing but spoiled baby boomers strikes the reader more than once. Matusow describes

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<sup>19</sup> Braunstein et al, p 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p 10.

<sup>21</sup> Allen Matusow, *the Unraveling of America*, 1984, p 296.



rock as “the principal art of the counterculture because of its demonstrable power to liberate the instincts”.<sup>22</sup> He gives credit to San Francisco’s “new human species”, the hippies, for playing their “own brand of rock and roll”.<sup>23</sup> He further argues that the songs the bands wrote celebrated sex and drugs and were “music to trip on”.<sup>24</sup> To argue that rock music in the sixties merely celebrated drugs and sex must be seen as an exaggeration. A number of songs dealt with social life and love, but beyond the “boy-meets-girl” factor. Generally, the songs expressed the urge for more love in life in general, as a reaction to the path the American individualism had taken in the 1960s. In contrast to Hall and Roszak, Matusow does not see any underlying message or meaning in “dropping out” as a protest against a society gone wrong. He attacks the liberalism of the era as politics gone wrong and the hippies as rejecting everything President Johnson stood for.<sup>25</sup> However, he credits the ephemeral movement for “portending as it did the erosion of the liberal values that had sustained bourgeois society...”<sup>26</sup>

Historians often seem to focus on the political aspects of the 1960s and the counterculture’s lack of essential moral content resulting in a social decline. From the title and cover of many books dealing with the 1960s, we can see how some writers reveal their viewpoint in the debate. Some examples are: *The Unraveling of America* (Matusow), *The Angry Decade: the Sixties* (Paul Sann) which is written in capital letters with red ink, *Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Todd Gitlin), *Coming Apart* (William O.

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<sup>22</sup> Matusow, p 304.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p 296.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p 296.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p 277.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p 308.

Neill) and *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (Jay Stevens). Another feature of books on the subject is the notion of using drug metaphors such as “high” and “heaven” in the title. This is often combined with a layout of strong colors and a picture of one or more hippies inside or on the front cover, which give a very general picture, though a very familiar one, of the counterculture.

Like Matusow, various scholars see the 1960s as a homogenous decade of social decline and do not give much credit to the counterculture. They see the close knit 1950s as unraveled and coming apart and blame the counterculture. Thomas Frank, author of the book *The Conquest of Cool* from 1997 argues that such writers depict the sixties as a ten-year fall from grace. This was the trend among scholars in the late seventies until the early eighties.<sup>27</sup>

Frank describes the political figures on the right to identify the term “the sixties”, interchangeably with the term “counterculture”, as “the source of every imaginable species of the social blight from which they have undertaken to rescue the nation”.<sup>28</sup> He argues that conservative writers see the counterculture as,

*a momentary aberration in American history that will be looked back upon as a quaint period of Bohemianism brought to the national elite.*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 1997, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/259919.html> , read April 17, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

The conservative writers, Frank argues, see the 1960s “as catastrophe” and a time of “excessive affluence, and of imbalance in the eternal war between generations”.<sup>30</sup>

Historian David Farber in his book, *The Sixties*, argues that conservative social critics

*summon the sixties as a kind of catchall bogeyman, useful for scaring up customers and thereby tend to argue that this covers the 1960s with a veil more than reanimating the period for subtler purposes.*<sup>31</sup>

The conservative viewpoint does not see the 1960s in a perspective that takes into consideration that the term “hippie” is media-created and that as soon as the mass media discovered the hippies, much of the originality of the movement vanished into hype.

Many scholars have accepted the conservative version as the standard account of the decade. The typical scenario is the story of the middle class youths protesting against the mainstream society as breaths of fresh air, and finally themselves ending up as mainstream; or put differently; as the New Left in ruins and the counterculture sold out to Hollywood.<sup>32</sup> The writers with a politically conservative standpoint have generally seen the counterculture as one period from 1967 to 1969 and have focused on the counterculture lifestyle as drug induced and a period that created social problems.

Scholars who see the value of hippies beyond the image of spoiled middle class youths, have focused on their cultural importance, seeing them as responsible for a cultural revolution in America. They have written about an idealistic subculture that disappeared after 1967 but lived on in popular culture. We can thus make a division

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<sup>30</sup> Frank.

<sup>31</sup> Faber. 5

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

between writers who put emphasis on the counterculture as an authentic and idealistic subculture of short duration, but with a worldview that affected American culture positively, and writers who see the 1960s as a period of social decline and of political liberalism gone wrong. As Hall wrote back in 1969, the hippies had their “moment” in 1967 and afterwards the counterculture became popular culture and the hippie a fad. The failure of generalizing the 1960s as one period of social decline and counterculture leaves out the differences between the ones that the media called hippies and the ones that called themselves hippies after the term had been coined.

The two views agree on a number of points: Both regard the middle class baby boom generation as protesting against the capitalist order, and the 1960s as causing a cultural shift and a break with traditional American mores, and that they were just as “transgressive and as menacing as revolutionary as countercultural participants believed them to be”.<sup>33</sup> Few scholars have written about the role of American business culture in relation to the 1960s as they tend to assume that business represented:

*A static, unchanging body of faiths, goals and practices, a background of muted, uniform gray against which the counterculture went through its colorful chapters.*<sup>34</sup>

The contrast lies in what to emphasize as the generating forces behind such changes: social forces or political forces, or both. In his book Frank attacks the stereotypical conservative view of the 1960s. He does not blame hippies for being naïve or drug induced freaks as Matusow, but he shows how the transformation came because of

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<sup>33</sup> Frank.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

powerful corporate forces. Frank argues that the counterculture's critique of mass society mimicked earlier developments in business itself, "when a new generation of executives attacked the stultified, hierarchical nature of corporate life".<sup>35</sup> Frank further argues that "counterculture and business culture evolved together over time-until the present day, when they have become essentially the same thing".<sup>36</sup> An essential argument throughout Frank's discussion of business forces and counterculture is that the 1960s live on in the near-archetypal dichotomy of "hip" and "square", now part of "advertising vernacular, signifying a choice between consumer styles".<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, to distinguish between a fake and authentic counterculture, he argues, was and still is difficult.<sup>38</sup>

Another part of the debate is among sociologists, culturalists and postmodernists about style, identity and what creates mass culture and popular culture. Central scholars that stand out in the discussion of popular culture and music are Roy Shuker's *Understanding Popular Music* from 1994/2001, Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* from 1979/1988, Simon Frith's *Sound Effects* published in 1981, Lawrence Grossberg's *We Gotta Get Out of this Place* from 1992 and John Storey's *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* from 1994. Academic analysis of popular music was somewhat slow to develop and media studies during the 1970s and 1980s tended to focus on television, overlooking the role of popular music. Since the 1990s, there has been a notable increase in material and courses on popular music either alone, or as part

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<sup>35</sup> Frank.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> ibid.

<sup>38</sup> ibid.

of popular culture and media studies. This has also been the trend at the University of Oslo.<sup>39</sup> The contemporary position of popular music reflects an acceptance of the essential value of rock and pop music as a cultural phenomena that can be used to understand any subculture's to contemporary time, whether the topic is cultural studies, feminist studies, media studies or political economy.<sup>40</sup>

Roy Shuker addresses how meaning is produced in popular music and states in his book that cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field which “embraces the economic base and associated social relations within which the music is produced and consumed, textual analysis, auteur study, and the nature of the audience”.<sup>41</sup> To paraphrase Shuker: “To study popular music is to study popular culture”.<sup>42</sup>

Lawrence Grossberg is more concerned about the power of culture and understands culture as both an object and source of passion which is implicated in power.<sup>43</sup> Even though rock and pop music have come a long way as far as scholarly studies are concerned, there is an ongoing debate about their role in cultural studies in the new conservatives field.<sup>44</sup> As Shuker argues, there are many ways into the examination of popular culture:

*The high culture tradition identified with Leavisite English criticism; the mass society thesis associated with Frankfurt School Marxism; three variants of critical media theory- political*

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<sup>39</sup> Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 1994/2001, p 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p xi.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p 1.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Outta this Place* 1992. p 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p 3.

*economy, structuralism and culturalism, and attempts to articulate post modern analyses of the popular.*<sup>45</sup>

In other words, terms like “popular” and “culture” are defined according to criteria that depend on the tradition the scholar sees himself as part of. As Shuker reminds us, it is a difficult task to define “phenomena which are social practices as well as economic products or pedagogic concepts, and which are not static but constantly evolving”.<sup>46</sup>

An interesting debate that has not reached a consensus, discusses whether the term “popular” can be related to culture at all. The use of the term “culture” raises the question in many camps of whether something popular can by definition be cultural.<sup>47</sup> The high culture tradition is a conservative camp and is accustomed to the notion that the only authentic and real culture is art.<sup>48</sup> As Shuker argues, this view has been criticized for “failing to recognize the active nature of popular culture consumption”.<sup>49</sup> It has to be stressed that a formerly rather obvious distinction between the two ways of defining the contents of culture, has become more unclear in recent years. Products and producers of culture within the high culture tradition, such as performers of classical music, have become increasingly commodified and commercialized, while some forms of popular culture, traditionally called “low culture”, have gained more respect, as is the case with jazz.<sup>50</sup> “High culture” has traditionally been seen as an elitist culture, meaning artifacts that are preferred by the upper cultural, political, social or economical elite of a society.

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<sup>45</sup> Grossberg, p 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p 18.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p 18.

“Low culture” has been seen as encompassing as mass culture/popular culture and therefore commodified and mass produced.<sup>51</sup> It seems the two ways of defining culture have become closer in meaning and adjusted to the public demand. This notion is in line with a more recent post-modernistic view, which seeks to eliminate boundaries and traditional oppositions within the definition of culture.<sup>52</sup> Simon Frith is one of the scholars within this camp.

The Frankfurt school of social theory on the political left has much in common with the high culture conservative commentators, as Frankfurt theorists have tended to see culture as objectified under the capitalist system of production and thereby criticizing popular culture in general.<sup>53</sup> Culturalist perspectives on popular culture are marked by the ideas of the Italian Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci. Shuker argues:

*Those who stress the consumption of popular music as an active , rather than a passive process, who identify the many instances of oppositional politics in popular music, and who emphasize the tensions and contradictions at work within the music industry can be broadly described as ‘culturalist’.*<sup>54</sup>

Hall has already been mentioned as a leading figure of this field. Another scholar who has emphasized the individual in the definition of cultural meaning is Dick Hebdige in his much acclaimed book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. He was among the early contributors who interpreted subcultures in terms of the way they challenged hegemony

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<sup>51</sup> Grossberg, p 18.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 23.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 18.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p 23.



through style rather than “overt ideological articulations”.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Hebdige managed to characterize:

*The recuperation of subcultural disorder in terms of either an economic conversion of the signs and symbols of the subculture into mass culture commodities, or an ideological conversion of the subcultural participant into either complete otherness or complete spectacle.*<sup>56</sup>

Even though his book uses the punk movement in its discussion of working class subcultural activity and style, it has pertinent arguments concerning the particular style youth cultures adopt and why. As we shall see when discussing the counterculture, his thoughts can fairly well be related to the discussion of hippies.

## **1.2 Definitions of terms**

### *Subculture*

“Subculture” is defined as a minority of the people within a society who prefer to act as a culture of their own and who are more or less rejected by mainstream society at large.

The definition of a subculture within sociology is “a culture or set of people with distinct values and lifestyle within a larger culture”.<sup>57</sup> According to Hebdige, members of a subculture deliberately try to detach themselves “from the taken-for-granted landscape of normalized forms” and do so by celebrating everything that is not a ‘taken for granted’

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<sup>55</sup> Shuker Shuker, p 206, and Judith Halberstam, “What’s that smell? Subcultural Community and Queer Temporalities” at Scholar and Feminist Online <http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/halbers3.htm>, read December 4, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Shuker, p 206.

part of society.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the awareness and meaning of style is essential within a subculture, serving to set the subculture apart from the dominant culture through image.

The majority within a society decide the dominant culture, which everything else is measured against. The dominant culture does not relate to values and cultures counter to what is commonly accepted (by majority). Still, as it happens, many subcultures end up being accepted by the majority; which means that the subculture no longer exists as a radical opposition to the "regular" society but, is embedded in the dominant culture. The counterculture of the 1960s started as a local subculture in opposition to the dominant culture of America before it culminated into a counterculture noticed throughout the American society. The counterculture fell apart by the early 1970s for several reasons, one of them clearly being that people did not relate to many of its values. Although not adopting countercultural values and lifestyle in general, large parts of the American society were much influenced by the counterculture through popular cultural manifestations in the shape of music, art and fashion.

According to Shuker, taste in music can be seen as "conceived and maintained in social groups' efforts to differentiate and distance themselves from others, and underpinning varying social status positions".<sup>59</sup> Members of a subculture deliberately seek to be different, and choice of music and ways of dressing most often play the main parts in this process. As early as 1950, American sociologist David Riesman distinguished between two types of youths in relation to popular music. The first type he

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<sup>58</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The meaning of style*, 1979/1991, p 19.

<sup>59</sup> Shuker, p 215.

saw as a majority, who listened to commercial music and had few if any preferences concerning type of music, listening to what was popular at the moment. For this group, music was most important as a socializing factor. The second group he saw as a minority group of more active and critical listeners with a preference for “the uncommercialized, unadvertised small bands [and] a profound resentment of the commercialization of radio and musicians”.<sup>60</sup> For this group, music had as its purpose to create distance from what the majority represented. Thus, from time to time, certain genres within music attain a function of rebel-music, and the less commonly accepted the better.

Within a subculture there is already a potential market for products to be sold, as long as they are different from what the dominant and mainstream culture prefers. The ambiguity is visible through the role of artifacts consumed by a subculture in order to be different. Though despising commercialized music and fashion, the members of a subculture want to look differently and do so by other means, as with punks in the 1980s’ England who became massive consumers of safety pins. Specialist shops provide subcultures with different clothes and music to make them stand out from the mainstream crowds. Thereby, even subcultures tend to be mass-consumers and creators of a niche for certain producers of consumer products. In Haight Ashbury in early 1966, two local hippies opened a psychedelic book shop that provided the locals with books from beat

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<sup>60</sup> David Riesman, ‘Listening to Popular Music,’ *American Quarterly*, 2, republished in Frith S. and Goodwin (eds.), *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, New York, in Shuker, p 215.

authors and everything about psychedelics there was to know.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Frank links consumerism to the 1960s' counterculture and argues that business

*dogged the counterculture with a fake counterculture, a commercial replica that seemed to ape its every move for the titillation of the TV watching millions and the nation's corporate sponsors.*<sup>62</sup>

The line between subculture and mainstream culture is unclear in relation to the commodification of products. This must be seen in relation to American postwar capitalistic affluence that changed just as much as the youth movements of the period, "undertaking dramatic transformations of both the way it operated" and the way business saw itself.<sup>63</sup> It is clear that the ambiguous relationship between youth and big business both take advantage of each other. Youths are motivated by the urge to be with the in-crowds or to be different, and big business try to satiate the market potential they know exists.

#### *Underground versus Mainstream Culture*

The idea of "underground" is essential within music, especially within rock music. The term obtained its real meaning in the 1960s as it referred to the lifestyle, taste in fashion and music of a minority group of young people within a subculture. In short, it refers to everything that was popular within the growing subculture before it turned popular culture within the dominant culture.

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<sup>61</sup> Peter Coyote, "Ron Thelin and the Red House," <http://www.petercoyote.com/redhouse.html>, read February 1, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Frank.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

In the arts, the term “mainstream” is commonly applied to something which is recognized by the masses because it is not out of the ordinary. When something is seen as “mainstream”, it indicates what most people consider to be “culture”. What goes on in underground circles refers to phenomena the larger society does not even know is available. In other words, the notion of “underground” indicates that this is the opposite of what most people view as “mainstream”. In San Francisco, there were underground newspapers, radio stations, comics, art, bands, and shows, to name a few. They all had in common that they were produced only in small quantities and became known by word of mouth. A statement by musician Frank Zappa serves as an indication of how such barriers are created and changed interchangeably, “The mainstream comes to you, but you have to go to the underground”.<sup>64</sup>

### *Popular Culture*

Throughout this study, “popular culture” is defined as a sociological term which indicates that anything popular and mass produced lies within the concept of culture. *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines “popular”, as something or someone that is “liked by a lot of people.” “Culture” is defined as “the ideas, beliefs, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a society”.<sup>65</sup> The term “culture” is vague as it refers to both a process of production and a product that is related to human actions, either as consumed or in the shape of traditions and values, as described above.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Wikipedia Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_culture) , This page was last modified 13:10, March 1, 2005.

<sup>65</sup> *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 3rd edition, 1995.

<sup>66</sup> Hebdige, p 5.

Popular culture is closely related to the mass media and big business by means of advertising and mass production for the purpose of gaining attention from the intended target-group. Through the mass media a product reaches large parts of the population, giving people a chance to decide whether to consume the product or not, whether it is a song or pair of jeans. What becomes popular tends to have certain features that catch people's attention, which with the help from advertising through television, magazines and radio is broadcast to a specific group of the population. The influence of advertising penetrates the mass media to such an extent that it can be questioned whether we really choose ourselves, or if advertisements, commercials and producers of a product take the decision for us. To reach the status of popular culture, the process or product has to be so popular or interesting that it acquires a popular status among a certain number of people. According to the above definitions, popular culture can be seen as both the dominating culture of the majority and the minority in a society. The contents of a popular culture are to a large degree decided by the mass media. However,

*Popular culture cannot be described as just the aggregate product of those industries; instead, it is the result of a continuing interaction between those industries and the people of the society who consume their products.*<sup>67</sup>

Popular culture is constantly changing and is “specific to place and time and it forms currents and eddies”, in the sense that a small group of people will always have a strong interest in something of which “the mainstream popular culture is only partially

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<sup>67</sup>Wikipedia Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_culture), This page was last modified 13:10, March 1, 2005.

aware”.<sup>68</sup> The counterculture of the 1960s proved that even though big business and the mass media play an important role as far as advertising and mass-scale production is concerned, they do not always have a decisive role in what will end up as trends and popular culture.

Trends are often created first within a subculture. However, big business is quick to pick up new trends and to exploit their potential with mass production and advertising. It will nevertheless always be the majority within a society that decides what will sell and become a mass-consumed product. The advertising business with its opportunities to reach millions through advertising on television, radio, internet and newspapers often serves to create interest in a product. The media alone also serve to create great hype around a new trend or product, as was the case with the lifestyle of the people in Haight Ashbury.

Popular culture among young people often differs from what adults see as popular culture. This has to do with taste and values. Shuker argues:

*For some it [popular] simply means appealing to the people, whereas for others it means something much more grounded in or ‘of’ the people.*<sup>69</sup>

In other words, some regard the meaning of popular as commercialized, while others see it as within a culture. Often parts of a society’s popular culture have long and embedded traditions, such as fox hunting in Britain and the Norwegian tradition of skiing. The first understanding of popular as commercialized will be used as a basis throughout, bearing

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<sup>68</sup> Wikipedia Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_culture), This page was last modified 13:10, March 1, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Shuker, p 3.

in mind that the idea of popularity is contested, and “while not all popular culture is associated with mass media, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two”.<sup>70</sup> Along with Shuker, this study equates anything popular with “commercial, cultural forms of entertainment”. and regards technocracy, corporate forces and mass production as inevitable features of popular culture.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, popular culture is not separated from mass production; pop culture or popular culture is by definition mass-produced artifacts.<sup>72</sup> As mass produced products for a mass market, popular culture is an essential part of history that describes and gives an overview of the social and cultural values of a period.

In his book *The Sixties*, the historian David Farber sums up how popular culture

*challenged the integrity and virtue of basic institutions and values that had taken on the cover of American traditions, like the nuclear family, anticommunism, the economic bottom line, and material progress... Some challenged the system; others rejected it and tried to create an alternative culture. They tested American common sense.*<sup>73</sup>

Without attempting to decide whether popular culture is less valuable than other kinds of cultural production, in the light of the discussion of high versus low culture, this thesis is placed among the lines of cultural theorists as discussed in section 1.1, and far from a conservative view on the 1960s. Still, according to Professor Douglas Kellner in his essay “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture”,

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<sup>70</sup> Shuker, p 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p 12.

<sup>73</sup> David Farber ed., *The Sixties From Memory to History*, (University of North Carolina Press) 1994, p 4.



*More debate is needed as to whether using the term "popular culture" in any form risks blunting the critical edge of cultural studies, and whether it is thus simply better to avoid terms like "mass culture" and "popular culture"*<sup>74</sup>

He suggests, in a post-modernistic viewpoint, to “take culture itself as the field of one’s studies” and abandon the division between high and low, popular and elite. He believes this will also eradicate the stereotypical images of a culture.<sup>75</sup>

### *Rock*

The rock music of the 1960s started as a musical expression within a subculture and turned into popular culture because of people’s interest in the music, the lifestyle it brought along, and the wide mass media coverage of the new music hitting the surface after the Beatles made it all right again to play rock. Shuker’s general definition of the genre pop/rock is:

*...it consists of a hybrid of musical traditions, styles, and influences, with the only common element being that it is characterized by a strong rhythmical component, and generally, but not exclusively, relies on electronic amplification.*<sup>76</sup>

According to Keir Keightley, rock is a frustratingly vague term which “may mean rebellion in musical form, distorted guitars, aggressive drumming, and bad attitude”.

The term also indicates that, “styles, genres and performers that are thought to merit the name ‘rock’ must be seen as serious, significant and legitimate in some way”.<sup>77</sup> In other

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<sup>74</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Communications vs. Cultural Studies: Overcoming the Divide” <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/flash/kellneraug8.swf>, read November 11, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Shuker, p 9.

<sup>77</sup> Keir Keightley, “Reconsidering rock” in Simon Frith (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, 2001, p 109.

words, rock was a legitimate term for Motown artists in the early sixties, as they were serious musicians performing music one could shake to in the same way as with the rock of the fifties.

Music as popular culture is essential within social groupings and subcultures. It reflects the members within a culture; and for the youth culture of the 1960s, it mirrored their contempt and frustration with society, as the punk movement mirrored similar emotions among British youths in the 1980s. Rock, the way it came to expression in the 1960s, was not preferred by the dominant culture at large, but by a certain group of young people who were many enough to create a popular culture. Lovers of rock popularly see rock as everything pop music is not. Rock likes to see itself as less mainstream and not as easily grasped as pop music. This is what rock is all about, not to be as commercialized as to be accepted by the mainstream. Yet, rock music too involves mass production of CDs and various merchandize, such as t - shirts. As Keightley argues, for some, the act of purchasing the latest record of one's favorite band produces "intense feelings of freedom, rebellion, marginality, oppositionality, uniqueness and authenticity".<sup>78</sup> The act of purchasing a mass produced commodity, like a CD, contradicts the rebel-like role of youths within a subculture. At the same time it is a necessary procedure for anyone craving to create distance to the mainstream culture.

A definition of pop as opposed to rock music will make it even clearer what rock is, and is not:

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<sup>78</sup> Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering rock" in Simon Frith (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, 2001, p 109.

*Pop implies a very different set of values as opposed to rock. Pop makes no bones about being mainstream. It accepts and embraces the requirements to be instantly pleasing and to make a pretty picture of itself. Rock on the other hand, has liked to think it was somehow more profound, non- conformist, self- directed and intelligent.*<sup>79</sup>

Pop music is designed to sell and to gain profit for the producer. Pop music covers any genre, including rock. Popular music is whatever style of music that is broadly popular among most people. Sales numbers are essential to the characterization of pop music. Consequently, rock is pop music at times, too. However, the distinction between commercialized music and music that is not produced to reach everyone is essential. It is nevertheless the public who decide what becomes popular by buying records. The distinction between what is and is not commercial music sometimes becomes blurred, which only reveals that popular music can be anything, as long as it is popular among enough people. Rock music often becomes pop music in its very attempts to distance itself from such branding. Most serious rock bands today end up creating their own trademark and selling merchandise and songs for commercial use such as TV commercials. This is an interesting notion and to link this to the 1960s will only highlight that such trends were apparent even then.

The term “commercial” is what makes a difference to the diverse genres. Commercial rock is not the same as rock alone. The better produced and polished a song is, the more mainstream it turns out to be. The greatest difference between commercial pop music and rock is perhaps that pop does not have a particular subcultural market or

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<sup>79</sup> Shuker, p 215.

culture in mind as it is designed to appeal to broad segments of a society. If a type of music is created for the sole purpose of appealing to everyone, it has no authenticity to it either.

### *Authentic Music*

The term “authentic” gives a nuanced picture of the difference between pop and rock.

The adversary to commercial rock and pop music is authentic rock, which is all but polished into perfection by recording studios and professional studio musicians.

Exemplified by Bruce Springsteen, authentic rock as a genre has as its point to

*develop musical conventions which are, in themselves, measures of ‘truth.’ As listeners we are drawn into a certain form of reality: this is what it is like to live in America, that is what it is like to love or hurt.*<sup>80</sup>

Today, many bands work hard to capture such authenticity by signing on to smaller record companies that welcome them for being different and not aiming at a mainstream audience. Authenticity is an appreciated mode of music for people who are looking for something else than just what is currently on the music lists. The mode of authenticity of the San Francisco bands was very much shaped by their surrounding environment that fed back to the musicians as sources of inspiration; and during their formative years they seldom, if ever, toured outside San Francisco in order to gain popularity. To sum up with Simon Frith,

*‘authentic’ designates those music, musicians and musical experiences seen to be direct and honest, uncorrupted by*

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<sup>80</sup> Simon Frith “Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music” in Leppert, R. And MCleary, S (eds.) *Music and Society*, Cambridge Un. Press, pp 88-130, in Shuker, p 149.

*commerce, trendiness, derivativeness...[it] is a term affixed to music which offers sincere expressions of genuine feeling, original creativity, or an organic sense of community...[it] is a value, a quality we ascribe to perceived relationships between music, socio-industrial practices, and listeners or audiences.<sup>81</sup>*

Music that is perceived as authentic by some may not be seen as such by others or may become so over time. The Jefferson Airplane were by some claimed to be selling out to big business in the second half of the 1960s, but as member Jorma Kaukonen argues,

*I remember a conversation Jerry Garcia, Janice Joplin and I had back in the mid 60's about 'authenticity.' Still looking at ourselves in the light of our ongoing interest in traditional music we wondered how long it would take until we would be considred [sic]'authentic.' Jerry posited [sic] that if we stayed alive long enough we would become archetypes and in an odd way, I think that time has proved him right.<sup>82</sup>*

#### *Youths and Baby Boomers*

The term “youths” as a social category will refer to those between around 16 and 21, as 21 was the age of consent. There was a shift from the use of “teenager” to “youth” in the mid-sixties giving the term a much broader meaning, not only referring to a stage of life, but to a lifestyle that was mirrored in contemporary fashion.<sup>83</sup>

“Baby boomer” is a term pointing to all the babies born shortly after the Second World War in 1945. Because of the end of the Second World War and a huge economic growth, 77 million babies were born between 1946 and 1964. By 1964, the year set as the beginning of the San Francisco cultural developments, 40 percent of the American

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<sup>81</sup> Simon Frith (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, 2001, p 131.

<sup>82</sup> Email interview, January 20, 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Frith, 2001, p 122.

population was under 20.<sup>84</sup> Such facts make it obvious that this group had an enormous impact as a whole, a notion that only becomes strengthened, knowing that to a great extent, the income youth had available was spent on leisure.<sup>85</sup> In 1967, the great year of the counterculture, these children had turned at the most 22 years of age and constituted a counterculture that quickly spread outside the boundaries of San Francisco, California.

### **1.3 Chapter Progression**

Chapter 2 discusses the changing tides in popular music and some of the reasons behind such an enormous shift, with references to the work of Albert Grossberg and Richard A. Peterson. There will be a focus on the underlying reasons that gave room for what some sees as a cultural revolution. Chapter 3 discusses how the distinct American individualism penetrated the baby boom generation's lifestyle and the development of the new music genre. It will be argued that the inhabitants in the Haight area were individualistically minded pioneers who today must be seen as responsible for the San Francisco music scene and culture that evolved in Haight Ashbury. Values are important when discussing the hippie lifestyle. Their values reflected their abilities to do their own thing as distinct from the conformist lifestyle in which they had been raised. An essential part of this chapter is the culmination of the subcultural and local phenomena of the Haight Ashbury into big business and popular culture. This transformation reveals that the idealistic and reform-minded youth, when coming of age, had the very same values

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<sup>84</sup> Shuker, p 36.

<sup>85</sup> Frith, 2001, p 125.

and aims as their parents. The book *Habits of the Heart* has been used extensively to show how this development corresponds with American individualism in general.

Chapter 4 will focus on definitions of the San Francisco Sound. It will be highlighted what journalists and musicians thought about the evolving rock scene in the early 1960s, mainly through the use of articles from *Time*, *the San Francisco Oracle*, *the New York Times*, and *Rolling Stone*. The musicians' own thoughts about their music and lifestyle are important sources throughout. It will be emphasized that rock music during the 1960s became an integrated part of the younger generation's lifestyle, and that many youth's lifestyle in general was spectacular because of the way it turned into a counterculture.

How the San Francisco rock became mainstream is in itself an interesting phenomenon, as it is, even today, far from music that is considered pop music by most people. The idea of how authenticity changes with time is essential in this matter. An important point of this chapter is how the San Francisco musicians themselves chose to enter the life of fame, a life that used to represent everything they resented.

Chapter 5 will sum up my arguments and conclude my thesis.

## **2.0 The Sounds of the Sixties**

Before discussing the distinct music scene and lifestyle that developed in San Francisco and beyond in the 1960s, it is necessary to look at the socio-cultural context of America at the dawn of a new era. In this chapter, a recurrent theme will be how popular culture forms currents and eddies identifiable to a particular period of time. The 1950s made the USA familiar with a visible youth culture for the first time, and focus will be on the youth culture of the 1950s and music in order to explain why the early 1960s America was in a period of a little visible youth culture. Moreover, the folk music boom that had as its peak the first three-year of the 1960s, helped to shape a new youth culture. The folk boom laid the foundations for future rock festivals and arrangements in the years to come.

Elvis Presley was the first rock 'n' roll musician who in the mid 1950s became idolized and appraised by up and until then non-existing American youth culture. It will be discussed why the mid-1950s suddenly saw a rock and youth culture revolution. The birth of a youth culture seen in relation to the development of mass media and corporative forces realizing their market potential will be seen as essential forces behind the growing visibility of American teenagers. The 1950s laid the foundations for the popular culture of the 1960s in terms of a young middle class generation with strong buying power, a potential big business forces wanted to exploit to the full. The



emergence of a distinct youth culture is closely linked to a growing autonomy of leisure and more pocket money in circulation among middle class youths.<sup>86</sup>

## **2.1 Social Context: Why the 1960s?**

The postwar years benefited all layers of American society and gave rise to a growth in spending power not experienced before among the American population. It gave youths other opportunities to express themselves as individuals. This opportunity was quickly grasped by big business corporations ready to exploit the great potential the enormous baby boom generation offered in terms of pocket money. The Beatles were the first band that influenced their fans a step beyond Elvis Presley and made possible market-driven corporations that both created demands and supplied new demands among young people, such as LPs, fashion and gadgets. With the Beatles evolved a distinct youth lifestyle that business forces soon learned how to take advantage of. The influence of the Beatles will not be discussed in this chapter which will rather focus on reasons for the rise of the American youth culture that evolved out of the 1950s, and which by 1967 was apparent as a counterculture.

Richard A. Peterson asks “why 1955?” in his essay discussing the advent of rock music in *Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. The year 1955 marks the beginning of a new genre termed “rock and roll”, a term first used by DJ Alan Freed to describe the rollicking white R and B music he sent through the airwaves.<sup>87</sup> To

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<sup>86</sup> Shuker, p 195.

<sup>87</sup> Wikipedia Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock\\_and\\_roll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_and_roll), read December 6, 2005.

return to Peterson's question: Was it really so that rock was emerging out of the *Zeitgeist* of the mid-1950s, or put another way, what made it rise so abruptly in a brief period? Several factors are seen as explanatory to why the 1950s channeled a youth culture and created rock and roll. Some of them are: The number of baby boomers coming of age roughly at the same time, creative individuals like Elvis Presley, and the growing role of the mass media. The entrance of television and radio transformed the commercial culture industry and acted as catalysts for popular culture and social consciousness.<sup>88</sup> Peterson examines these influences and argues first of all that in 1954 the oldest baby boomers were only nine years old. This fact suggests their role to be non-existent as far as potential buying power is concerned at the time. Secondly, he argues that Elvis simply took advantage of the opportunities that became available to him. He was a great talent who was discovered for his voice and looks, and he did not let this opportunity slip by when he got it. Finally, he argues there was an unsaturated market demand that had been

*growing for over a decade and remained largely unsatiated because the decision makers in the culture industry simply did not recognize it was there.*<sup>89</sup>

Peterson answers his questions with how a systematic change in the structure of arrangements, habits and assumptions of the commercial culture industry created the opportunity for rock music to emerge.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Richard A. Peterson, "Why 1955? Explaining the advent of rock music" in Simon Frith (ed) *Popular Music Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. 2004. p 273.

<sup>89</sup> Frith, 2004, p 275.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p 275.

Another important change was the arrival of television that forced radio networks to play records as the cheapest effective form of programming. The arrival of cheap transistor radios and the development of the radio Top Forty hits also meant that a much larger number and far wider range of music was presented to the audience.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, independent record distributors grew, and independent record companies experimented with new sounds to “tap the unsaturated market demand”.<sup>92</sup> Peterson thereby sees entrepreneurial creativity as an essential reason for the sudden advent of rock and roll. The market was there, and the growth of the mass media and the rejuvenation of radio made a wide range of music easily available to the audience.

In the last paragraphs there has been a focus on the market as a whole, and reasons for the birth of rock and roll in the mid-fifties have been presented. The groups of youths who embraced the new music must also be discussed, and Albert Grossberg’s *We Gotta Get Out of this Place* gives a nuanced picture of the young peoples role in relation to Petersons ‘why’ question. By 1964, 20% of the US population was under twenty years of age, and their status as “the quiet generation” was about to change drastically.<sup>93</sup>

Grossberg explains,

*... youth inhabited a place in the social order which demands that they live daily life according to someone else’s dreams, someone else’s trajectories... Youth was subordinated to its already defined place within a social narrative that was told before it arrived.*<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Frith 2004, p 293.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p 293.

<sup>93</sup> Albert Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place*, 1992, p 172.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p 179.

Rock music entered as a long-awaited affective statement, a cry and a demand, for a generation that was not heard or noticed. Rock served to define both the new music and the changing concept of youth and inspired many to come to terms with the vision of “radical rejection of boredom as the very negation of youth.”<sup>95</sup> Rock entered the scene very conveniently, as many young were in need of something that separated them from the adult world. Grossberg argues:

*Rock declared youth’s rejection of the boredom, surveillance, control and normalcy of the straight world as their own imagined future*<sup>96</sup>

The combination radio Top Forty, enabling music to reach out to a large audience, and the changing view many young had of the adult world as a world a set a part from their own, gave rise to an American youth culture. Rock music was *the* medium through which many for the first time could reveal a growing anger rooted in the boredom of conformity. Young Americans started to seek changes of values and interests that differed from their parents and mainstream American culture. Rock was a central force behind young people’s growing need for visibility and the urge for adjustment to society on other premises than of the parent generation. Shuker argues “Rock emerged as a way of mapping the specific structures of youth’s affective alienation on the geographies of everyday life”.<sup>97</sup> The authenticity of rock music, meaning how it was able to “resonate with youth’s common desires, feelings and experiences in a public shared language” turned rock music into objects of identification to youth by its honesty and

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<sup>95</sup> Grossberg, p 180.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p 180.

<sup>97</sup> Shuker, p 42.

straightforwardness. Rock was something youth could relate to as a whole.<sup>98</sup> The period of a visible American youth culture in the 1950s was short lived, and as the decade ended so did the popularity of the new rock music that soon was replaced with commercialized rock music that did not sound the same in the ears of the youths. The traces of an only so recent youth culture were soon to be gone, at least so it seemed.

In the early 1960s, rock was supposedly in decline and passé according to contemporary critics, and the shift from rock to folk music as popular music seemed to prove their point, at least for a while. As with any fad and subculture, rock of the 1950s became incorporated in the normalization of society and eventually seen as not very different and rebel-like any longer. As Hebdige argues, a standardization of any subculture serves to create new subcultures and peoples' search for different objects of mystification in which the mainstream do not participate.<sup>99</sup> For a while folk music served as the mystical new object for American students in search of something that separated them from the rest. Rock music was no longer rebel music, but a commercialized product that had lost its function as a separator from the mainstream. Other reasons for the decline of rock were more obvious. A generation shift among the leading musicians of the 1950s left a vacuum that other artists were unable to fill. Elvis's career went on hold as he served his duty in the US army in 1958. When he entered the limelight again two years later, he concentrated on his acting career rather than performing on stage as a rock artist. The record industry reacted to the fading of the rock 'n' roll boom "by grooming

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<sup>98</sup> Shuker, p 43.

<sup>99</sup> Hebdige, p 69.

malleable artists who offered a watered - down counterpart to the wilder sounds of the initial explosion” in the words of music journalist Ritchie Unterberger.<sup>100</sup> The record industry seemed to act in desperation and replaced genuine rock ‘n’ roll with what became known as “bubblegum rock,” rock that lacked the integrity and quality of the artists who created rock in the 1950s. The death of Buddy Holly in 1959 and the arrival of the Beatles in 1964 are seen by writers and journalists as the essential turning points.<sup>101</sup>

The again so “sudden public acceptance of rock ‘n’ roll” in the mid-1960s by so many people who should known better in the opinion of many adults, did not surprise the record industry, rather it came as expected according to a *Time* article from May 1965 called “The Sound of the Sixties”. The reason for this was simply surveys done by the record and radio industries which revealed that many of those who preferred the rock of the 1950s still did so. According to this article, more than 40% of the “teen beat” records sold in the U.S.A were bought by persons over 20 years.<sup>102</sup> These figures point out that young students who seemingly preferred the rock stars of the 1950s, were also responsible for larger parts of the record sales by the Beatles and other current rock bands. However, the article does not distinguish rock of the early 1960s and the sound of the Beatles, but does admit how rock had changed style to “bubblegum rock”. The writer of the article argues:

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<sup>100</sup> Unterberger, 2002, p 31.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p 31.

<sup>102</sup> *Time* ”The Sound of the Sixties”, May 21, 1965.

*For the past ten years, social commentators, with more hope than insight, have been predicting that rock would roll over and die the day after tomorrow. Yet it is still very much here, front, center, and belting out from extra speakers in the unguarded flank... The big beat is everywhere... It has become, in fact, the international anthem of a new and restless generation, the pulse beat for new modes of dress, dance language, art and morality... For better or worse, like it or loathe it, rock 'n' roll is the sound of the Sixties.*<sup>103</sup>

The writer associates the new fashion with the music and the whole turmoil with the “new and restless generation” that only before had been seen as “the quiet generation”. America is a culture of diversity that serves to create a sense of togetherness among the people. When rock had retained its accepted style, old fans who were young teenagers in the 1950s and the ones who were responsible for the first visible traces of an American youth culture did not hide the fact that they liked the music of the Beatles and other British bands anymore. Thereby they helped to the increasing sale of rock also in the mid 1960s. The baby boomers who were only 9 years old when rock and roll hit the scene were coming of age as young students in the mid-sixties and constituted America’s biggest market ever. In between 1950s rock and 1960s rock was a period of a folk-music boom in America.

## **2.2 From Rock to Folk and the Birth of a Political Consciousness**

The development of rock to folk to folk-rock to rock again within popular culture exemplifies the importance of music to youth cultures and tells much about social life among many young at a specific period of time. It is helpful first to look at the music to

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<sup>103</sup> *Time* “The Sound of the Sixties”, May 21, 1965.

understand what went on socially and culturally in a particular era. Youth cultures use music to distinguish themselves and to express their emotions. Seeing this in connection with the political status quo of an era can give answers to how many young people felt about changes in society at the time. As Keir Keightley argues, “the culture of ‘folk’ expressed so many ideas that would become central to rock, so explicit a fashion” that the folk boom as culture must be examined more closely.<sup>104</sup>

The folk boom that began in 1960 and lasted to 1963 helped give birth to a political consciousness among young students. Apparently they did not listen to rock anymore because of the bubblegum shape it had attained. Due to the great number of babies born in post-war America, “U.S higher education will enroll 4, 300,000 students, up a plump 7,5% Postwar Babies...which colleges in turn will start feeling in 1965,” according to the *Time* article “Fifty Million Students”.<sup>105</sup> Along with college or university studies often followed involvement in politics, either as discussion among friends or actively in organizations like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). According to *Time*, 315 new political groups were established on 353 campuses, whereof 169 were conservative and 146 were liberal. Civil rights, House Un- American activities, banning the bomb, and a growing concern for national affairs, were activities and matters on the political agenda that engaged students everywhere.<sup>106</sup> The first years of the 1960s were years of strong commitment among young students now having the opportunity for the first time as young responsible adults to form an opinion of their own about how to lead life. Many of

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<sup>104</sup> Frith, 2001, p 120.

<sup>105</sup> *Time*, “Fifty Million Students,” Sept. 15, 1961.

<sup>106</sup> *Time*, “The Need to Speak Out,” Feb. 23, 1962.



the students were part of the 1950's short-lasting rock revolution and youth culture. Folk music served as a similar catalyst and gave many what they were seeking at the time. Through folk music a sense of community was created among its followers that also served to distinguish them from the mainstream part of society.

A collective identity was achieved through involvement in organizations or music, which also were the right things to do if you followed contemporary trends in the early 1960s. As "bubblegum" rock did not appeal to the rock and rollers of the 1950s, they turned elsewhere for musical inspiration. Suddenly rock was "un-cool" and folk was "cool". Folk music became an alternative to rock, because of the topical lyrics that often contained statements about the current social ills, which fit well to the new life of students going to college and engaging in politics. Unterberger offers a reasonable explanation to why some started to listen to or perform folk music as opposed rock:

*Whether newly tuned in folk musicians were political or not, however, the expanding folk community offered a support system at a time in their lives- often their late teens or college years- at which slightly odd and artistic misfits were hungriest for a bohemian self-image.<sup>107</sup>*

Coffee houses became gathering places and forums of individuality for musicians and their audience of college age.<sup>108</sup> One reason for the shift from rock to folk is definitively that many moved away from home and found a new safety in coffeehouses and the music played there. Moreover, folk music emerged in a variety ways as reactions to "the developments of mass society" and folk defined itself in "its rejection of mass society and

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<sup>107</sup> Unterberger, 2002, p 33.

<sup>108</sup> *Time*, "Sibyl with Guitar," Nov. 23, 1962.

mass culture”.<sup>109</sup> Approaching the age 20, students saw themselves as too mature for teenage “bubblegum music” and folk music seemed to be the intellectual preference of young students enrolling in higher education. Folk music was an underground phenomenon at first, and known only to the circles going to coffee houses and college concerts and therefore had some of the mystic elements so important for a subculture.

An article in *Time*, November 23, 1962, a time when folk music was at its most popular, highlights how folk music also ended as a huge trend,

*Removed from its natural backgrounds, folk singing has become both an esoteric cult and a light industry. Folk- song albums are all over the best seller charts, and fad folk singing groups command as much as \$ 10,000 a night in the big niteries [sic].*<sup>110</sup>

Folk singing was by 1962 a “cultural fad” that appealed to all from “genuine intellectuals, fake intellectuals, sing-it-yourself types and rootless root seekers”, but overall the focus of interest was among the young.<sup>111</sup> The notion of the two types of fans within folk music, the serious versus the “fakes”, is obvious: The dedicated followers with a passion for folk music for its background versus those who merely listen to what is currently on the pop charts. According to the above-mentioned article, such cultists or purists despised folk singers they saw as too commercialized. Musicians who earned well and showed this in the shape of a brand new car or a house were considered to be sellouts within purist circles. As the article puts it, “Folk singing is a religion, in the purists’ lexicon, and the big corporate trios are its money-changing De Milles”.

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<sup>109</sup> Frith, 2001, p 121.

<sup>110</sup> *Time*, “Sibyl with Guitar”, Nov. 23, 1962.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

The counterculture of the 1960s demonstrates how a fad often has its early beginnings as an underground phenomenon which attracts people for merely because it is unknown to the masses and projects a mystic aura, as pointed out by Hebdige. The distinction between commercial and non-commercial music is essential to underground cultures.

The notion of purism is common to many underground circles and helps preserve the rock genre's authenticity. Signing to a powerful record label, earning much money and attracting the mass media amounts to losing out in the opinions of purists. The *Time* article describes folk music enthusiasts and the importance of commercial groups:

*...[T]he Kingston's are accomplished entertainers, and many of their critics, Johnny-come-latelies to purify, forget that they probably would never have heard of folk music if they had not been first attracted by a heel-stomping ditty rendered by the Kingston Trio.*<sup>112</sup>

This is an essential point, because what is underground seldom reaches the public before the mass media write about it. Bands and acts that are part of the commercialized music business make sure a genre does not disappear, the way bubblegum rock artists did in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The beat of rock was kept alive thanks to younger teenagers and the record companies' mass production of polished acts and artists. Even though rock was seen as having become commercialized in the early 1960s, it nevertheless helped created a necessary foundation for the interpretation of rock music of the 1950s. With no

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<sup>112</sup> *Time*, "Sibyl with Guitar", Nov. 23, 1962.

contemporary musicians being able to play rock music the way it sounded performed by Elvis and his contemporaries, young people continued listening to the old timers rather than to the bubblegum rock and instead preferred folk music to current popular music. When the Beatles managed to capture the authenticity of the 1950s stars, a rock revival was on the verge of hitting the surface. After all, The Beatles had as their inspirational sources American rock stars of the 1950s. The folk music movement gave the new revival of rock additional features such as festivals and dances that preserved the community feeling that followers of folk music had created.

When the mass media discover a musician or a band, the product too often loses the authenticity that first made people stop and listen. The popularity of folk music in the period 1960 to 1963 is an example of the commercialization of underground trends. Folk music started to grow in underground circles and ended up as a popular cultural industry. According to Hebdige, each new subculture establishes new trends, generates new looks and sounds which feed back into the appropriate industries.<sup>113</sup> The very success of a subculture creates stabilization and seems to encourage its founders to move on to other music genres and fashions. Hebdige argues that rock entered the mid 1960s because of the stabilization of rock in the wrapping of bubblegum rock, which caused a migration to soul and a “subsequent reaffirmation of black themes and rhythms by white r & b and soul bands”.<sup>114</sup> It seems great success is the very first nail in the coffin of musical trends.

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<sup>113</sup> Hebdige, p 95.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p 69.

Folk music never took over the music scene entirely, but found its true life-blood among folk musicians and students, those who were teenagers when Elvis and Buddy Holly were stars. Folk music attracted a lot of people, and when rock music again became popular, the forces of steady followers were gathered. Many of the folk music adherents started to listen to rock music again in 1964. The folk boom is therefore essential to the rebirth of rock and the 1960s counterculture, just as the advent of rock and roll in the 1950s was to American youth culture.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at the backdrops to the enormous popular culture that penetrated the 1960s through music, fashion and lifestyle. The social and cultural context of the post war era, created a youth culture that embraced rock as their way of creating distance to the parent generation. Further, rock came timely into existence filling youth's leisure with meaning instead of meaninglessness. Along with Peterson I have argued that an organizing of the commercial culture industry, the advent of cheaper transistor radios, the work of radio DJs, and Top Forty helped push rock music a step forward as it reached a larger audience. Modern technology contributed to create the market that everybody knew was out there and managed to reach the teenagers who were bored with being placed within a social sphere where they did not feel comfortable. Postwar affluence made possible a consumer market for young people that separated them from the parent generation in terms of leisure goods as a distinct fashion and music.

The supposed decline of rock, the first three years of the 1960s, was a period of readjustment and change to rock music, or a change from Elvis to the Beatles, if you like.

When the rock stars of the 1950s left the limelight, there was left a vacuum that other musicians were unable to fill. The teenagers of the 1950s turned young adults in the 1960s. Many of them found support in folk music and kept for themselves a still-existing admiration for the 1950s rock music. The folk music movement laid the foundations for the subculture that grew out of San Francisco and the revival of rock music. The sense of community created in the folk movement, with gatherings in coffee houses, festivals, and a common political agenda, was preserved in the new rock revival with the Beatles and the San Francisco Sound. In retrospect, the folk boom can be said to signify a contemporary replacement of rock, as well as a definite sign of a growing political consciousness among students that would soon change to radicalism, politically for some, and musically for most of them.

### **3.0 American Individualism in the 1960s**

This chapter will discuss why the Haight Ashbury subculture attracted young baby boomers and how this can be seen in relation to American traditional individualism. In the following, I will link the conformity and wealthy lifestyle of the middle class to a growing frustration among parts of the baby boom generation. For some, harmony and affluence only created aggravation and a search for alternative values and means of expression. The traditional individualism that was valued among Americans in general in the postwar era, gave boost to expressive individualism and counterculture.

The subculture of Haight Ashbury became a catalyst for the evolving counterculture and served as a model for the hippie lifestyle. Seeing the subculture in relation to American individualism may provide an understanding of why it attracted so many followers and in the process also changed in terms of ideology. The subculture will be seen as a movement with originally other values than what was revealed through the counterculture. The Haight Ashbury bohemians' lifestyle presented an alternative standard of living for young people in opposition through drugs, clothing, music and collective living that demonstrated a major contradiction to the parent generation's way of life.

The media contributed to make people aware of the Haight Ashbury subculture and must be seen responsible for the stereotyped image and hype that soon rested on the area. The music produced in the Haight Ashbury came to serve the countercultural message. An explosive combination of colors, lights and sound, so familiar to the San Francisco

Scene, created an experience for the audience that was radically different from anything the dominant culture could ever represent.

It will therefore be considered, whether the expressive part of the baby boom generation actually did adopt different values with their new lifestyle, or just set forth a popular culture reflecting the Haight Ashbury subculture only in the vaguest sense through image. In the following, the terms “hippie” and “outsider” will refer to baby boom dropouts, while “bohemian” and “insider” refer to the original members of the Haight Ashbury subculture.

### **3.1 Traditional American Individualism; a Catalyst of the Counterculture**

Traditional individualism came to represent a barrier to self-realization for young baby boomers. The values that dominated thinking in postwar America are closely related to a rise of a new middle class and an affluence created by the Second World War. The writers of *Habits of the Heart* point back to the eighteenth century and the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville in order to explain American traditional individualism. Tocqueville first gave the American mode of personal expression an identity closely related to the American way of life. He saw the Americans he met on his travels in America as having a similar set of qualities. He called these traits “habits of the heart”, by which he referred to all the qualities that together formed the American character, such as values, ideas and opinions, and “the sum of moral and intellectual dispositions of men in



society”.<sup>115</sup> These habits or mores made up a distinct American individualism, something in between selfishness and isolation from the wider society.

American individualism has taken different forms throughout history, though having certain core values as its foundation. The different traditions include biblical, republican/civic, utilitarian and expressive individualism. Civic or republican individualism and biblical individualism represent the classical American shapes of individualism that see the individual “in relation to a larger whole, a community and a tradition.”<sup>116</sup> Out of reactions to the individual’s place in these traditions, utilitarian and later expressive individualism emerged. As argued in *Habits of the Heart*, there is no optimal individualism:

*Modern individualism seems to be producing a way of life that is neither individually nor socially viable, yet a return to traditional forms would be to return to intolerable discrimination and oppression.*<sup>117</sup>

The writers of *Habits of the Heart* argue that the philosopher John Locke gave name to modern individualism and the utilitarian way of thinking. Locke believed that the individual is prior to society and should act out of self-interest and thus not be second to society. If everybody acts out of their own self-interest, it will automatically benefit society as a whole. The tradition of utilitarian individualism primarily celebrates the ideal of becoming one’s own man. The self-made person is better explained through Benjamin Franklin. As argued in *Habits of the Heart*, Franklin remains the prototype of the

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<sup>115</sup> Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 1996, p 37.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p 143.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p 144.

utilitarian individualist. Franklin expressed the importance for the individual to have the opportunity “to get ahead on his or hers own initiative”.<sup>118</sup>

By the nineteenth century, Franklin’s example had become a way of life that soon began to cause reactions among people.<sup>119</sup> To be concerned only about your own well being and material interest came to seem problematic for many, especially women. It left too little room for love, human feeling and a “deeper expression of the self.”<sup>120</sup> The reaction created an alternative way for people to express themselves in the shape of expressive individualism. Walt Whitman’s work *Leaves of Grass* and especially the part called “Song of Myself” most clearly represented this turn of celebrating the individual that can be argued to be close to selfishness. It was not the drive towards wealth that was important, but a deeper cultivation of the self. Materialism alone was not the way to happiness, because identifying the self within a larger whole expressed the true happiness in life.

Society changes with time and as a consequence prevailing values should be adjusted and modernized simultaneously. The American history of individualism demonstrates the necessity of adjusting individualism to a period of time and not to adjust a period to individualism. Utilitarian individualism was rejuvenated in the post war era as a result of the parent generation’s experience with two world wars and in between times of depression. The parent generation now sought conformity and stabilization. The postwar affluence that came as a result of massive war-time mobilization of production,

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<sup>118</sup> Bellah, p 33.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p 33.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p 33.

created a large middle class and an economical safe future for people originally of working class background.

Individualism, as argued in *Habits of the Heart*”, places high demands upon every person even as the open nature of American society entices with chances of big rewards.”<sup>121</sup> With the opportunity to make one’s own choices, people often do what is expected of them, such as marrying, getting an education and not being very different from what is common in a middle class environment of the dominant culture. Consequently, the freedom of choice creates conformity which in reality leaves little room for other opportunities, unless one chooses to be different by making other choices than what is expected from the dominant value system. The baby boomers saw themselves in this position, and while most of them were pleased with a safe upbringing, others felt their opportunities to be restricted as a direct result of their well-off position.

### **3.2 Doing Your Own Thing: Traditional American Individualism at Stake**

Eventually, most subcultures become standardized and viewed by the dominant culture as yesterday’s news. When many choose to dress differently and adopt a specific lifestyle, certain features end up characterizing the specific culture. Traits like clothing and music further contribute in making the subculture visible within the dominant culture. Thus, a sense of uniformity and distinctiveness often characterizes a subculture. Such features often catch the attention of the media in the first place, as was the case with the Haight

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<sup>121</sup> Bellah et al., p viii.

Ashbury subculture. Though, some of its more idealistic members, such as the organization called Diggers, and Allen Ginsberg and his associates, sought revolution and to spread the gospel of love, no one intended their culture to end up as popular culture.

Historically, American values have been related to “an emphasis on family life, strong Christian religious beliefs and a commitment to participate in local politics”.<sup>122</sup> These values have shaped the national character of America. Values are “ideas shared by members of a society about what is worthwhile and important”, and dominant values serve to define “the national character of a society”.<sup>123</sup> The context in which the baby boomers grew up is essential to explain the counterculture and the expressive individualism that characterized its members. The great emphasis many parents had on traditional values in raising their children, eventually created a different outcome opposite from what they had intended, as the 1960s counterculture would prove.

The writers of *Recent Social trends in the United States: 1960-1990* point to a survey done by Robin Williams that revealed dominant American values, or “statements of preference,” in the postwar era. Fifteen core values became visible in this survey. Williams found that an emphasis on achievement or “progress” was a common theme in several of these values, such as “material comforts, appropriately achieved via efficient hard work, applied science, and reason.”<sup>124</sup> Williams also found a second theme, the protection of human rights as essential in a democracy. Among the fifteen core values were material comfort and “a strong desire for the ‘good life’, including material things”

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<sup>122</sup> Theodore Caplow et al., *Recent Social Trends in the United States 1960-1990, 1991*, p 555.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p 555.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p 55.

and an individualism which “placed a high value on individual responsibility and independence”.<sup>125</sup> Another core value, which is interesting in relation to the background of the baby boom generation, is the value of achievement and success in which “great value is placed on personal achievement, especially occupational success”,<sup>126</sup>

It is clear from this survey that the national character of the 1950s America had historically based values rooted in daily life. The weight put on achievement, a “good life”, and independence, put a pressure on people to fulfill expectations seen as essential by Americans in general. The emphasis on traditional individualism in the 1950s must be seen as a catalyst for the counterculture. This notion must be seen in relation to the baby boom generation being the first young generation experiencing affluence while growing up. The parents’ traditional values did not appeal to their children who had not experienced war and times of depression. Traditional American individualism therefore served as an entrapment and as a result manifested itself in expressive individualism for parts of the baby boom generation.

Stuart Hall is among the scholars who explain the behavior and value systems of hippies as reactions to American individualism. Hall discusses the mores of the American society which he refers to as “social codes.” These social codes, or mores, became a set of expectations which undermined a person’s sense of individualism. Social codes can be seen as everything parents expected of their children and wanted to transfer to them by means of values. While following social- and family-made conventions, people often

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<sup>125</sup> Caplow et al., p 559.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p 559.

believe they have acted according to their own intuitions and ambitions. In the long run what many people do is to follow social codes, strongly rooted traditions and values established and taught by the family. The hippies' radical lifestyle became a protest against the older generation's values and could just as well be seen as "a red warning light" for the American way of life in general.<sup>127</sup>

An individualistic choice in the eyes of the hippie was to reject the set social codes and to go your own way, translated into "doing your own thing", Counter-values became alternative options to the social codes the parent generation had taught their children. The baby boomers in opposition sought other ways of achieving self-realization, as they saw traditional American mores as barriers to self-fulfillment and personal individualism. As former hippie Steven Palmer states:

*...[T]here were options of how one might conduct or live their lives. Options are plenty. And this was important because 1950's America was very repressed. I don't mean to be judgemental [sic] because the population had suffered the depression and World War II, but stability and security were key and conformity was the way to get there. Conformity to many people equaled [sic] peace. But the effect was chilling on the baby boom generation who viewed the status quo as death. Clearly hypocrisy [sic] abounded. When you add the puritanical strains of the USA, you get a very repressive atmosphere.*<sup>128</sup>

A member of the local Haight Ashbury organization, Diggers, went as far as to state that there was an ongoing war between the living and the dead, where "the dead"

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<sup>127</sup> *Time*, "The Hippies" July 7, 1967.

<sup>128</sup> Email interview, Sept. 30, 2005.

symbolized the parent generation and “the establishment”. In an open letter in the local hippie newspaper he argues:

*The old are engaged in a bitter, deadly war upon the young, fighting for possession of a world that would have been theirs by right of age in any previous century... they have not changed with the world, they are citizens of the past. They are dead... only the young are not strangers to this time, and the old are slaughtering the young. Especially in America.*<sup>129</sup>

The writer uses expressions of war in his strong manifestation of the young versus the old, and the dead versus the young. He illustrates the great gap he sees between the two generations and how strongly he felt trapped in a way of life that did not leave any space for young people to develop as individuals on their own terms. Baby boomers grew up in a radically changed society, and the parent generation’s values did not seem appropriate as foundations of life anymore, thus giving many young people different perspectives on what to regard as important values.

Subcultures provide an alternative solution for people who feel misplaced in the dominant society in terms of existing values and expectations. Subcultures celebrate an expressive individualism that gives room for being different and instead celebrate individuality to such an extent that it creates conformity, as was the case with the counterculture. Some of the original Haight Ashbury bohemians wanted to add more focus on love and less on values that restricted the development of people’s individuality. They believed conformity created an entrapment of this development. Baby boomers in search of their identity felt a similar entrapment.

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<sup>129</sup> Chester Anderson, “Easter Sunday”, Haight Ashbury Collection, Santa Barbara, 1967.

Being somewhat younger than the Haight Ashbury bohemians, the baby boomers had a different background as part of the middle class and therefore a different outlook on the basics of life. The question to be asked is whether the baby boomers' endeavors to manifest alternative values actually reformed American individualism or simply strengthened traditional values even more.

### 3.3 The Media-Created Hippie

Coming of age, a minority of the enormous baby boom generation deliberately sought not to be related to the dominant American national character. The media called them "hippies." The term "hippie" derives from the word "hip" or "hipster" and was first used in a newspaper article in September 1965 to describe the inhabitants of the Haight Ashbury area.<sup>130</sup> *Time* described the hippies as "predominantly white, middle class, educated youths, ranging in age from 17 to 25 (though some as old as 50 can be spotted)"<sup>131</sup> So many people, from youths to people in their late twenties, dressed differently and looked unlike people of the dominant culture that the media invented a term for them. "Hippie" soon became a collective term to describe a member of the counterculture, someone "in the know" about what is really happening and "who adjusts or grooves with it" as one writer of *New York Times* described it back in 1967.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Wikipedia Encyclopedia, definition of "hippie," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippie>, read October 2 2005.

<sup>131</sup> *Time*, "The Hippies", July 7, 1967.

<sup>132</sup> *The New York Times*, "The 'Hashbury' is the Capital of the Hippies", May 14, 1967, p. 29.



By identifying and terming someone by their appearance and lifestyle, the media generalized thousands into one homogenous movement of people, all with similar values and beliefs. A *New York Times* article described hippies as,

*A cult of young people seeking liberation from contemporary society through the use of drugs, withdrawal from the economy and a search for what hippies call individual identity.*<sup>133</sup>

A *Time* article about hippies dating from 1967 is another example of the generalizations of the media which reveals a stereotyped portrayal of hippies:

*They find an almost childish fascination in pearls, beads, blossoms and bells, blinding strobe lights and ear shattering music, exotic clothing and erotic slogans.*<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, journalists tended to make a point of the hippies' long hair and how they were dirty because of poor living conditions (as many chose not to work). A typical stereotype of the hippie found in newspapers at the time was:

*Hippies like LSD, Marijuana, nude parties, sex, drawing on walls and sidewalks, not paying their rent, making noise, and rock 'n' roll music.*<sup>135</sup>

The point of view of the media must have been that since so many looked the same, they had also identical values which included the romanticized visions seen in slogans like, "Make Love not War" and a collective wish for an alteration of American values. The hippie lifestyle soon became a great fad and a hip style very much thanks to the

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<sup>133</sup> *The New York Times*, "A Challenging Period of Adjustment Has Set In Among Hippies of San Francisco", Aug. 19, 1967 p 27.

<sup>134</sup> *Time*, "The Hippies," July 7, 1967.

<sup>135</sup> *The New York Times*, "Organized Hippies Emerge on Coast", May 5, 1967, p 40.

media interest in the phenomenon. John Basset McCleary explains how the hippie culture became popular culture:

*The hippie culture created new forms of dress and decoration; other people copied these ideas, marketed them, got credit for them, and made money selling them to other folks who bought them to be cool... Hip is the alternative creativity of a culture, style is that creativity put to use as a way of life, and fashion (fad) is style that has been marketed.*<sup>136</sup>

People dressed like hippies without necessarily sharing their values or urges for dropping out of school. Hippies protested against conservative conventions they felt to be a hindrance to the development of an “individual identity”.<sup>137</sup> Their way of protesting was to be non-political quitting school and not engaging in matters related to American traditional values. Soon it became fashionable to drop out occasionally and be a part time hippie for fun and not as a demonstration. The memoirs of a woman growing up in the 1960s prove this argument:

*By the time I went to college in the Fall of 1968, my entire clothing style changed. Out of my mother's clutches, I went hippie. Or more accurately, pseudo-hippie. I did not head for San Francisco nor did I live on the streets. But I was dressed appropriately for protest marches, and that's what matters for this discussion. We were so sure we were counter-culture individualists. Radicals! Looking back I realize that you cannot be a non-conformist while conforming to a style all your peers have adopted. But it is fair to say, as a group we had left the mainstream.*<sup>138</sup>

If someone matched the media-given definition of a hippie in terms of appearance, his or her dress code thus served as a protest in itself since the elements of beads, flowers,

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<sup>136</sup> John Basset McCleary, *The Hippie Dictionary*, 2002, p 236.

<sup>137</sup> *Time*, “The Hippies,” July 7, 1967.

<sup>138</sup> Candance Rich, <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/hippie-clothes.htm>. Last modified August 22 , 2005. Read Oct. 2 2005.

psychedelic patterns, Native American inspired clothing, and the positive attitude towards drugs, were radically different from that of most people within mainstream American culture. If image should serve as a defining factor alone, it would be difficult to spot the difference between a part time hippie and someone genuinely into the lifestyle, like old beatniks and former folk musicians living in Haight Ashbury.

The original Haight Ashbury inhabitants that had served as models to the hippie persona did not relate to hippies, nor were they adopting poverty voluntarily. The bohemians were poor because they had chosen music, art and an alternative lifestyle. Instead of young people protesting their own way in subcultures across the country, it seems the Haight Ashbury image of drugs, music and a lifestyle, very much like the living conditions of the working class, provided the solution for young people of the middle class. The youth constituting the counterculture copied the bohemians' lifestyle, but did not adopt their values which were reflected in the changing view towards the "Negro". To the beats, the "Negro" was a model of cool, but in the counterculture he was a rare figure. As argued by Hall, the poor are rarely exotic and the "hippies cannot, then, find a sympathetic counterculture in black ghetto life..."<sup>139</sup> Instead, the American Indian became the hippie emblem of "the simple, a primitive survival on the continent of affluence..."<sup>140</sup>

Looking at contemporary writing in *the New York Times* and *Time* about hippies, the distinction between hippies as outsiders and the bohemians as insiders is evident, the

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<sup>139</sup> Hall, p 7.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p 6.

insiders being the remnants of the Beat generation and the hippies' middle class runaways between 18 and 22 years of age, sometimes younger. A *New York Times* article from May 1967 stated that half of the approximately 15,000 Haight inhabitants were refugees from the Beat scene in North Beach and Berkeley dropouts, while the remaining ones were younger middle class runaways with an average age of 20 and from California for the most part.<sup>141</sup> A long time Haight inhabitant suggests an answer to whom these young people were, and implies that the summer of 1967 changed the Haight Ashbury culture from subculture to counterculture and chaos,

*Now, it's mostly kids you see on the Haight. They are under 18 and they have placed themselves in a world which they don't understand. They are not old enough to have fully examined the society and [they] have decided it's lousy.*<sup>142</sup>

The members of the rock and roll bands living in Haight Ashbury were all among the insiders. They did not look upon themselves as hippies but were nevertheless seen as hippies by the mass media. Many of the musicians living in Haight Ashbury had been part of the folk boom in the early 1960s. Considering the year of birth of some of the members of the local bands (Grace Slick, Jorma Kaukonen, Country Joe, Jerry Garcia, Paul Kantner), which is between 1939 and 1942, we find that they were all in their mid-to-late twenties in 1966-7 and therefore not part of the baby boom generation.

The first round of baby boomers born in 1946 would be 22 years old in 1967. Thus, the baby boomers were in fact second-generation "dropouts", and seen as naïve by the

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<sup>141</sup> *The New York Times*, "The 'Hashbury' is the Capitol of the Hippies", May 14, 1967, p 29.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, "A Challenging Period of Adjustment has Set In Among Hippies of San Francisco", Aug. 19, 1967, p 27.

somewhat older dropouts and artists in the Haight area. This makes sense only when knowing that the Haight area originally became a place of refuge to old beatniks when their old place at North Beach became overcrowded and commercialized, as pointed out in a *New York Times* article May 1967.<sup>143</sup> Haight Ashbury basically turned into a cultural magnet by coincidence, as the rents there were cheap and the people who moved there were artistically creative and chose not to be part of the traditional pattern of living in America.<sup>144</sup> As people in the area began to be noticed for their music, shows and the use of LSD, it was more than cheap rents that made people move to the area. The mixture of people in their mid-to-late twenties and old beatniks, created the hippie lifestyle the media loved so much to portrait, and eventually to mock.

According to a number of *the New York Times* articles from the summer and autumn of 1967, these young hippies saw themselves as “the new breed” and believed they could alter the world situation through their lifestyle. The bohemians, who had lived in the area since it was a tiny subculture, expressed frustration toward their new neighbors and did not want to be associated with them. As remnants of the Beat generation, they were beginning to realize that their way of life was just a utopian fantasy. The optimism that “things are going their way” found among the young hippies was not any longer shared by their older counterparts.<sup>145</sup> Summed up in one sentence by one of the original bohemians: “That back to nature scene is okay when 20... But when

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<sup>143</sup> *The New York Times*, “The ‘Hashbury’ is the Capitol of the Hippies”, May 14, 1967, p 29.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, “Negroes Angered By Coast Hippies”, Sept. 24, 1967, p 50.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, “The ‘Hashbury’ is the Capitol of the Hippies”, May 14, 1967, p 120.

you're looking at 35 you want to know something's happening to you".<sup>146</sup> I believe he and many with him saw themselves in the past through the hippies and realized that it was time to move on and face the realities of life and stop trying to change them.

People who went to the shows and concerts in San Francisco at Avalon or the Fillmore, were hardly genuine baby boom dropouts in the sense not working or living on the streets. The shows cost \$ 3.50, money that a dropout would not have to spend on a party.<sup>147</sup> These shows were mostly crowded with "borderline" hippies who could afford the lifestyle and the "mod outfit" that cost at least \$67.50. As a *New York Times* journalist stated, "There is always a sprinkling of genuine, barefoot, freaked-out types on the dance floor, but few of them pay to get in".<sup>148</sup> Most of the hippies who had arrived in Haight Ashbury the summer of 1967, did not work, and those who did were preferably postmen as such a job did not "require much thought or effort".<sup>149</sup> The hippies not working at all were simply beggars or made through the days by sharing with friends what they had available.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, a hippie-managed employment agency provided part time labor and the local organization the Diggers, based on voluntary work, distributed free food and clothes.<sup>151</sup> Arguably, the number of genuine hippies living on the streets was lower than it must have seemed at the time. The counterculture would not have grown the way it did without a strong buying power provided by the part-time hippies.

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<sup>146</sup> *The New York Times*, "The 'Hashbury' is the Capitol of the Hippies", May 14, 1967, p 120.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

By the summer of 1967, the area had become a tourist attraction and overcrowded with runaway teenagers. The scenario was one of hippie stores, clothes, and other hippie lifestyle gadgets. Someone had even started to arrange hippie tours for tourists to watch these strange people called hippies.<sup>152</sup> The original migrants' lifestyle was at risk, and many saw it as falling apart with drugs and a growing criminality. Runaways and young people inspired by a media-hyped lifestyle soon penetrated the once-so-quiet neighborhood. Several of the artists and musicians in Haight Ashbury came to be seen as sellouts for opening hippie shops or having success as musicians by the time media and youth had began noticing what went on there.

In October 1967, some of the remaining bohemians arranged a “hippie funeral” to demonstrate that the subculture of Haight Ashbury was dead and corrupted by big business.<sup>153</sup> They felt the community was in danger of losing its identity and was at risk of “becoming a ghetto for a colonial sub-people called hippies”.<sup>154</sup> With the arrival of the counterculture, nothing became left of the original subculture from the early 1960s, other than its outside shield of fashion and music and its emphasis on community. The commercialization of the culture changed its contents.

### **3.4 A Restrictive Counterculture Individualism**

Hippies made expressive individualism possible through a collective lifestyle and a focus on “doing your own thing”. Expressive individualism can easily turn into selfishness, and

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<sup>152</sup> *The New York Times*, “The ‘Hashbury’ is the Capitol of the Hippies”, May 14, 1967, p 120.

<sup>153</sup> *Rolling Stone*, Nov. 9, 1967, p 11.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, p 11.

the hippies can be argued to be somewhere in between expressive and selfish the way they lived. The Hippies were so into themselves that they did not realize that their alternative values became a hindrance for the development of their own individualism. The hippies had no goals other than believing they acted out a better life than other people by doing their thing. They sought personal identity through group identity in intimate social groups and urged to find themselves through interaction with others who shared their values. Thus, the hippies' sense of individualism was expressive in terms of their need to communicate their individuality together. One way of revealing this sense of individualism was to live together, such as the original Haight Ashbury migrants.

Most of the rock and roll artists and the other bohemians lived in the same house which created a sense of a family. Collective living involved a very restricted setting centered around the Haight Ashbury neighborhood, concerts and shows, and for a few, communal living in the countryside. This reveals that the bohemians' lifestyle was collective but not all-embracing, since such a lifestyle was appropriate only for people with similar values. In other words, to fit in you should look like the others and generally agree with their lifestyle. If you did not listen to psychedelic music, drink or do drugs, you simply did not fit in, features typical for a subculture. These contradictions were also noticed by newspapers at the time. With the strong emphasis on individuality came an unexplainable feeling of community and what hippies called "individual identity."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *The New York Times*, "A Challenging Period of Adjustment has Set In Among Hippies of San Francisco", Aug., 19, 1967, p 27.



According to an article in *the New York Times*, May 1967, the original bohemians were basically interested in spreading the gospel of love, whereas the younger hippies had a different way of life, summed up by a hippie: “Think what you want, but the number one rule is that you can’t force your thing on other people”.<sup>156</sup> As David Pichaske argues,

*The yes of the sixties was a romantic yes, and children of the sixties were a wildly romantic generation... essentially a private yes, meaning not so much a social movement, organized, programmed and charted.*<sup>157</sup>

Still, as pointed out by Pichaske, there is a contradiction in this romantic yes as, “More than anything else, romantics are into themselves”.<sup>158</sup> He continues, “He [the hippie] transcended himself and his world in experiences involving himself and his world”.<sup>159</sup> Through their lifestyle, the hippies created a private sphere just as narrow as the one they criticized by establishing a group identity founded on lifestyle, taste in music and the neighborhood they lived. As argued in *Time*:

*Individualism may continue to wane as men seek personal identity in group identity. That, of course, involves a contradiction between ‘doing one’s own thing’ and doing it with others.*<sup>160</sup>

Another contradiction concerning the all-embracing community of the counterculture is the minor representation of African American people and an ambiguous relationship towards African Americans from the middle class dropouts. This notion was

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<sup>156</sup> *The New York Times*, “Organized Hippies Emerge on Coast”, May 5, 1967, p 42.

<sup>157</sup> David Pichaske, *A Generation in Motion*, 1979, p 92-93.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, p 98.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p 92.

<sup>160</sup> *Time*, “From the ‘60s to the ‘70s: Dissent and Discovery”, Dec. 19, 1969.

also noticed by journalists at the time. A *Time* article from the summer of 1967 reflects over this, stating: “The Negro, a model of cool to the beats is a rare character in the hippie scene.”<sup>161</sup> A New York hippie explains, “How can a Negro drop out? He’s there, at bedrock, all the time.”<sup>162</sup> Even though hippies preached community and the individual’s right to follow his or her own intuitions, they did not include everyone in their lifestyle. This reveals an ambiguous movement, tightly knitted in terms of individualism but an ambivalence regarding who to include in the community.

In the 1960s, there was still a considerable difference between whites and African Americans in terms of income, and more African Americans struggled to make ends meet on the lower scale of the working class. Many worked hard to get a step beyond poverty and felt intimidated by middle class hippies who could go back to their life anytime they chose, but meanwhile pretended to be poor. In general, African Americans did not understand why hippies chose to live in poverty, while they themselves were struggling to make ends meet.

African Americans living in Haight Ashbury moreover felt there was a double standard set by local law enforcers and city officials. There was a low limit of tolerance for African Americans and other immigrants in the area, while hippies often could very act as they pleased without police interference. African American inhabitants in the Haight believed hippies got away with their lifestyle and behavior merely because they were white. “These hippies have come in and turned a once peaceful neighborhood into a

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<sup>161</sup> *Time*, “The Hippies” July 7, 1967.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

slum”, one long time resident of Haight Ashbury said to *the New York Times*.<sup>163</sup> The African Americans in the neighborhood felt discriminated against the hippies getting better treatment than they did as citizens.<sup>164</sup> According to *the New York Times*, September 24, 1967, “white people made up 60% of the Haight Ashbury population, Negroes 30%, and the remaining 10%, other minority groups”.<sup>165</sup>

The members of the original subculture enacted an individualism that turned out to be very restrictive and came to show through the larger counterculture that also adopted an expressive individualism. The values apparent in the counterculture, turned out not to be radically different from the parent generation’s focus on private spheres and self-fulfillment. Hippies created intimate social groups and loosened the ropes of traditional values they felt as a hindrance to their individualism. “Intimate” and “social” are two terms that contradict each other, and the counterculture was full of similar contradictions, which can be seen as one of the reasons it did not last. By collective emphasis on drugs, voluntarily poverty and dress code, the movement changed into being conform in a radical way

The writers of *Habits of the Heart* emphasize the American ethics of “getting involved” which points to why the general American is involved only within restricted settings, such as the local community. The hippies too were involved only within a narrow sphere and only for their own well-being. Their sense of individualism was nevertheless one of being a people who got a collective pleasure from dancing to the

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<sup>163</sup> *The New York Times*, “Negroes Angered by Coast Hippies”, Sept. 24, 1967, p 50.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, “Organized Hippies Emerge on Coast” May 5, 1967. p 40.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, “Negroes Angered by Coast Hippies”, Sept. 24, 1967, p 50.

same music, dressing alike, and taking the same drugs. The contents of the Haight Ashbury subculture provided the shape of the counterculture by expressing the hippies' emotional states of mind through an alternative culture. Music served as the collective voice for a whole generation and created a coherence they had felt missing in the dominant culture.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the hippie's values in relation to American individualism. Traditional American individualism was by many in the 1950s felt as to be outdated and little adjusted for its time. As a reaction, some baby boomers chose to drop out of society and cultivate an expressive form of individualism. The expressive turn individualism took in the 1960s, must be seen in relation to the postwar affluence and the growth of a new middle class. Too much focus on traditional values and conformity came to be felt as a hindrance to young baby boomers. The Haight Ashbury subculture provided the solution to a minority of the baby boom generation through music, arts, fashion and drugs.

The media painted a picture of the counterculture that did not fit with the values of the original bohemians in the Haight Ashbury. The media also revealed that the original bohemians' way of life was restricted to a narrow sphere that left little room for people different than themselves. These were traits that the baby boomers later called "individual individuality" that also came to recognize the counterculture. As a result from vast media coverage, baby boomers flocked San Francisco in order to practice voluntary poverty and get high on drugs.

The bohemians living the Haight Ashbury were remnants of a beat culture that had also chosen to live on the side of society, many of whom did not relate to the way of life lead by hippies. Hippies were of middle class background, and the radically different lifestyle of old beatniks and musicians in Haight Ashbury served as a model for the counterculture. The African American was no longer “model of cool” as a mythic image. Instead the Native American served this role. Indian themes of beads, pearls and feathers were more in line with the hippie’s way of life and the counterculture turned out to be a predominantly white movement. In their efforts to be different, the hippie sense of community became just as restricted and left out the ones with different lifestyles and most African Americans. Some baby boomers’ break with American core values can be seen as the responsible force behind the counterculture, and its downfall a too strong emphasis on the expressive turn of individualism with little or no consideration for other people.

By acting out a more community-oriented individualism, hippies indirectly looked for people who fitted into a community within the framework of their ideals. Their sense of individualism became a restricted set of social codes. For the hippie part of the baby boomers, American individualism had turned into “doing what everyone else does” and did not lead to a break with American traditional values. In terms of the counterculture, many went back to a middle class life, perhaps finishing college studies and attaining a regular life in the suburbs.

## **4.0 The San Francisco Sound and Scene: Commodification of a Subculture**

In this chapter, the San Francisco Sound (“SF Sound”) will be defined through interviews with some of the musicians themselves and articles written at the time in order to present a nuanced picture of the elements that made this music scene possible. Moreover, the chapter will attempt to come to terms with the commercialization of the music scene which will be linked to the Monterey International Pop Festival the summer of 1967, regarded as an essential turning point for the subculture in Haight Ashbury. Eventually, the significance of the SF bands and the counterculture will be discussed. An understanding of what the SF Sound involved will also reveal why the scene eventually was commercialized and also why it became the centre of a popular culture that has been said to define the 1960s culturally. Through the SF music we can better understand the culture that grew out of Haight Ashbury, and perhaps why it attracted young people. It may also come clear that music came to act as a uniting force to a group of the young generation, helping them to express their frustration with American values.

### **4.1 The San Francisco Sound Defined**

The SF sound developed into a scene as a result of the bands that gathered in Haight Ashbury and the musicians’ more or less similar backgrounds and lifestyle. It was a very close-knit community where everybody knew each other and often lived under the same roof and went to the same parties. How the distinct rock music reflects the bohemians and the hippies, is in my opinion one of the most significant features of the SF Sound. It was

music free of restrictions, like its listeners' state of mind, and hence seen as "radical" by the outside world of conservative young and adults. The music reflected a deliberate alienation from society in general and served as a cultural form and expression for many young people who were not at ease with the general expectations of society. The catchy beats of the songs and lyrics about love, drugs and sometimes-political messages, helped express young peoples frustration with what they saw as an "other-directed society" in terms of values and lifestyle. Whereas some sought identification through economic safety and traditional values, hippies and bohemians from the folk music scene and the Beat generation sought identification with each other through music and community. Trying to come to grips with yourself and your individuality became a goal to reach with the help of music, meditation, and for some, hallucinogenic drugs.

A *Time* article from the summer of 1967 with the significant title "Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out", argues the new sound had few if any musical limits. What mattered was the spontaneity that reflected itself in the music and peoples' state of mind. The writer is obviously impressed as he describes music he has recently heard for the first time, pointing out the close relationship between the new sound and the people there:

*The San Francisco Sound encompasses everything from bluegrass to Indian ragas, from Bach to jug-band music- often with the framework of a single song. It's a raw, raucous, rough- hewn sound that has the spark and spontaneity of a free-for-all jam session... The sound is also the scene... the music is a reflection of the defiant new bohemians.*<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *Time*, "Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out," June 23, 1967.

In *Rolling Stone*, February 10 1968, Jann Wenner discusses rock and roll music and brings up a rather narrow definition of what he sees as the San Francisco Sound. He includes seven bands which he claims to be an indigenous part of the scene, bands he believes “easily cut off just about everything in the genre heard elsewhere in the country”. The bands that Wenner highlights in his article are Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Moby Grape, Country Joe and the Fish, Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin, Steve Miller Band, and the Quicksilver Messenger Service. He refers to San Francisco as “the Liverpool of the United States”. In contrast to Liverpool, the people and the bands have not split for a bigger audience, but have stayed behind and been joined by many more bands and people.<sup>167</sup> He justifies the use of the term “San Francisco Scene” by arguing that in one way or another, there has been a supportive scene in the city “longer than the Time-Life creation of the Haight Ashbury”. In his opinion, the seven bands represent the San Francisco Sound, since within the SF scene, “there exists something more specific and something much more subtle and relevant to the music”.<sup>168</sup>

Gatherings and shows always include one or more of the seven bands and this, he argues, is essential to the formation of the “scene” and the San Francisco Sound. The feeling of being part of this scene must come to the musician himself, as “you will never find it by looking”.<sup>169</sup> This means, the SF music must come naturally to the musicians and not through copying the local bands. This way of seeing it is very interesting, as

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<sup>167</sup> *Rolling Stone*, 1968, p 16.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, p 16.

<sup>169</sup> *Rolling Stone*, 1968, p 16.



many bands moved to San Francisco in order to be part of the new scene. As early as the spring of 1966, the city was becoming a magnet for “underground” bands from other cities that had heard of the evolving music scene.<sup>170</sup> In Wenner’s opinion, this was not the way to create the distinct sound. He emphasizes the importance of social life as very effective to the authentic sound of the music which could not be created by other musicians solely by moving to Haight Ashbury. Wenner’s argument seems to confirm that the original bands were the scene, and the sound developed naturally for the musicians through interaction with each other, experience, and the shows.

Another point Wenner highlights, is that San Francisco had no tradition of a studio scene, which means that the musicians had to trust their own skills only. Such experience creates professionalism over time. Knowing the musicians largely wrote their songs themselves is for Wenner a natural expansion from the lack of a studio scene. It is clear that authenticity is an important quality of the SF bands that audibly distinguished them from bands in other cities. The context in which the musicians played and lived created a music that reflected their lifestyle and loose structure both in music and life. During its formative years before 1967, the music mirrored the people there and their individualistic way of life. Not to be part of mainstream America meant to create music that was different too. The music was authentic, as it represented a subculture untouched by the mass media and big business. To emphasize what the SF Sound was and was not, Wenner lists altogether seven elements that in his opinion create the distinct sound:

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<sup>170</sup> Gene Sculatti and David Seay,, *San Francisco Nights*, 1985. p 114.

*Original and originally used material: technical virtuosity: strong emphasis on and an immediate base in instrumental work, and the tightness, strength and urgency that comes from long, live performances.*<sup>171</sup>

Further, according to Wenner, the SF musicians had their strongest affinity to black music, which meant that blues and soul were important elements for the outcome of the music.

The San Francisco Sound was a result of individualistically-minded people who did not want live a conform life full of restrictions. This left little room for participation from people outside the local Haight Ashbury community, but it also left the music unbiased by contemporary popular music. The music reflects the notion of ‘doing your own thing’, as the musicians dared to do what they pleased and did not care about big business, at least not during the formative years. The SF Sound was a counter result of the American credos about how to live life just, which had developed into traditional individualism throughout the postwar era. The San Francisco musicians/bohemians were all but traditional in their ways of doing things and living life, and they were highly individualistic. Despite living in a tightly-knit community, people found room for privacy, and this became reflected in the music. The sense of community among the musicians and the other people in Haight Ashbury reveals the idealistic and romantic aspects of a subculture that were not preserved in the larger counterculture. It also reveals the aspect of music as community. An organization of enthusiastic pioneers called the “Family Dog”, believed music had to be enjoyed while dancing and not while seated on a

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<sup>171</sup> *Rolling Stone*, 1968, p 16.

chair, which was the usual procedure for a concert. They rented an empty building and hired the local bands in Haight Ashbury. The first show was held October 16 1965 and was an early demonstration of the San Francisco Sound and crucial to its further development. The show turned out to be a huge success and inspired the Family Dog to organize more shows, and other people to arrange similar shows. The audiences wore colorful costumes, used LSD, and were surrounded by colors from a light show.

Light shows became standard for the later shows as they created an atmosphere that highlighted the musical experiences. Lightshows are the seventh element Wenner believes as to be formative to the SF Sound, which he believes, have an aspect of theatre in captivating “the now” since the bands play the music in many of the same ways that the lights are presented. “Aware of the ability of the music and lights to enforce their own sensory world”, the SF groups realized “the existential nature of rock and roll and have learned to use pure sound itself in a musical way”.<sup>172</sup> The use of strobe lights and fluid projections created lava lamp-like images in all kinds of colors. Steven Palmer, once a SF hippie and today a counterculture archivist, tries to elucidate the experience felt at the shows,

*When you dance to music in an ecstatic state, it feels like your own physical molecules are shedding or expanding, moving against the constraints of your physical body. It changes your perception. You realize that reality is relative. It just depends on the angle you're looking at it from. And that experience allowed people to*

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<sup>172</sup> *Rolling Stone*, 1968, p 16.

*realize that there were options of how one might conduct or live their lives.*<sup>173</sup>

The context with music, drugs, and colors together created a psychedelic atmosphere which made these shows very popular among the locals in San Francisco and soon beyond. People came for the total experience of psychedelics and not only the music. The SF Sound revealed a greater communication between the music itself and the people who made it, and the people who listen to it, compared to the rock of the 1950s where the artists were separated from the audience to a greater extent. The concerts were part of a show that relied on the audience for a successful evening. The crowds at the shows wore the same clothes as the musicians, were of the same age, and were often friends from the same community. According to *Time*, a general purpose of such shows was to immerse everybody in sound and light and set them in a trance-like state of mind, with or without the drugs.<sup>174</sup> An anonymous writer of *the San Francisco Oracle* sums up the importance of the shows. With the shows came, as he argues,

*... the possibility of creating a total environment with lights and sounds, amplified, electronic, guaranteed to blow your mind.*<sup>175</sup>

He further claims that those who attended the Family Dog shows were *the* psychedelic generation.

A new word, “psychedelia”, came into existence with LSD, because of the effect it had on music, fashion and people’s thoughts. The best way to define the music, and

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<sup>173</sup> Email interview, Sept 30, 2005.

<sup>174</sup> *Time*, June 23, 1967.

<sup>175</sup> *the San Francisco Oracle*, no 1, 1966, 6 (or page 8 in the new printed collection)

make sense of the role of psychedelics in the music, is to ask the musicians themselves.

Jorma Kaukonen of Jefferson Airplane characterizes the SF Sound and psychedelia:

*The San Francisco bands such as Jefferson Airplane (my band) and others tended not to follow the three minute songwriting formulas successfully used by commercial songwriters for years... The subject matter was more diverse also, reflecting actual social changes. Musically speaking, the S.F. bands were not as technically 'slick' so there were always exciting precipices occurring not only in live performances but also in recordings. The psychedelic sound of the time tended to center around guitar tricks, but not always. The guitar sounds of the era have become a genre today and almost every rock and roll kid playing knows how to get them. At the time, it was all quite new.*<sup>176</sup>

Another pioneer of the SF scene, Country Joe McDonald, answers: “It was electric...not acoustic...and very folk and blues and traditional based for the most part”,<sup>177</sup> Another essential change was that no acoustic instruments were used in acid rock, and it got louder than the folk rock that permeated the music in the mid-sixties. Rather than acoustic guitars, electric guitars were preferred by San Francisco rockers. Kaukonen’s and Country Joe’s answers reflect how diverse and complex the music that came out of San Francisco really was, and that even those who were part of the music scene have problems describing everything it encompasses. The music coming out of San Francisco was different from anything going on in music at the time, and for that reason extraordinary.

LSD was the choice of drug in Haight Ashbury and later became related to the hippie culture. Alcohol was not even sold at the shows and concerts. Until October 1966,

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<sup>176</sup> Jorma Kaukonen, email interview, April 3, 2005.

<sup>177</sup> Country Joe McDonald, email interview, January 28 2005.

LSD was a legal drug, and together with cannabis it was part of the bohemian and hippie lifestyle. LSD was also seen as a way to get an understanding of your inner self. The use of drugs in connection with listening to music was believed to strengthen people's perceptions and the experience of the music itself. According to Hall the use of drugs also served a role as the ticket of entrance, "for many hippies, drug taking probably carries no deep philosophic implication: it is simply the insignia of entry into the group, a sort of required conformity".<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, cannabis and LSD were functional as tools of demonstration since the middle class had a different choice of accepted drugs, tobacco and alcohol.<sup>179</sup> Cannabis had not been proved to be more damaging than smoking, yet it was not an accepted drug. Thus, drugs created an even greater distance to dominant society in regards of its moral and sometimes blurred codes of right and wrong. It is evident that drug taking had other functions than "getting high".

As far as the music is concerned, the birth of psychedelia resulted in long concerts as songs often evolved into jamming and long instrumental solos. LSD was not merely a San Francisco phenomenon, as people from London to Paris had access to it. Thus, psychedelia was inseparable from the spread of LSD, or put another way, a natural expansion of the use of hallucinogenic drugs. LSD nevertheless had an essential role in the formation of the youth culture of the 1960s. Allen Cohen of *the San Francisco Oracle*

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<sup>178</sup> Hall, p 15.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

described the importance of LSD as “the rocket engine of most of the social or creative tendencies that were emerging in the 1960s”.<sup>180</sup>

A man known as “Bear,” the former Augustus Owsley Stanley III, was responsible for the production of LSD in San Francisco, made in his underground laboratory. He later developed the Grateful Dead’s distinct sound system. Consequently, he should be appropriate to answer how essential he thinks the drugs were to the SF Sound. He answered,

*Absolutely essential. Acid, mescaline/peyote psilocybin mushrooms and cannabis. Janis' band dropped acid and smoked pot, she was just a drunk - only later she became a junkie, which killed her.*<sup>181</sup>

The “truth”, as he refers to it, in the music, will not be explored by other means than with hallucinogenic drugs. “Bear’s” answers very much reflect the difficulties in defining the SF Sound even today, and confirm that drugs were an important part of the music scene all together, primarily as a source of inspiration. According to “Bear,” the atmosphere created with the drugs, the music, and the shows is essential to the psychedelic experience. He consequently argues that you will not understand or be fully part of it if one or the other is omitted. This state of mind reached only through LSD is what I believe he means by the “truth”. Furthermore, he claimed that an attempt to write about the Haight Ashbury music and culture without partaking in the drugs will only produce a piece of fiction:

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<sup>180</sup> David Farber “The Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation” in Peter Braunstein et. Al., *Imagine Nation* , 2002, p 29.

<sup>181</sup> Email interview, March 31 2005.

*If you are really interested in any aspect of the psychedelics era you MUST partake of the 'drugs'. Literally - it is impossible to make any sense out of any of it, it is like a blind person trying to understand colour, light and shadow. If this not possible for you, I strongly advise choosing another subject for your thesis. Even the music does not make any sense unless you can get high and listen to it.*<sup>182</sup>

Although not fulfilling his requirements, it is clear to me how important the drugs were because of their mind-altering effects. Drugs bring the user into a state of mind impossible to explain or understand for someone who has not tried the drugs, and it is a condition unobtainable without the drugs.

With “Bear’s” answers in mind, it is necessary to define the role of psychedelic drugs from the viewpoint of a musician. Jorma Kaukonen says about the role of drugs:

*Without psychedelics things wouldn't have developed the way they did. We all know that's a fact; it certainly changes the way we looked at things... It emerged in odd ways, and when I couldn't think of a more traditional rock and roll solo, I wouldn't hesitate to play some weird thing that was lurking in my mind.*<sup>183</sup>

Psychedelia, according to the answers of the pioneer SF musicians, must be understood as a part of the SF Sound that includes any song written or played under the influence of LSD, but is not a phenomenon which alone defines the SF music. Psychedelia was an important aspect of the performances, but was not distinctive of the San Francisco bands. It is safe to state that psychedelia is a collective term for describing the influence of LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs on the music itself, and people's choice of colors, most clearly seen through the contemporary 1960s fashion. Primarily, the term includes a state

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<sup>182</sup> Email interview, March 31, 2005.

<sup>183</sup> Bassett McCleary, 2002, p 388.



of mind where all senses are strengthened, a condition most similar to that of meditation on the highest level.

## **4.2 The Monterey International Pop Festival: Commercialization of the Scene**

The event that really gave the SF bands national recognition and landed their record deals was the Monterey International Pop Festival (Monterey) from June 16 through the June 18, 1967. John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas and record mogul Lou Adler, among others, organized the festival with the vision that the time had come to establish rock as an art form alongside jazz and classical music. The organizers billed the event as “three days of music, love and flowers”, and it became a festival that meant many different things to different people.<sup>184</sup> The festival served as a showcase for the participating bands as managers and record companies fought with each other to sign them. Monterey created a “signing frenzy” to use the words of Sculatti and Seay, and the list of bands that came to Monterey as amateurs and left as superstars is long.<sup>185</sup> The organizers’ original aim was to profit from the festival through the new music that had appeared all over California and that was beginning to draw the attention of people. Because of economic difficulties, the festival ended up as an event based on free attendance by the artists with the promise by the organizers to give all the income to charity. Nevertheless, the festival revealed to the outside world what became the stereotypical image of the counterculture:

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<sup>184</sup> Sculatti and Seay. p 162.

<sup>185</sup> Sculatti and Seay. p 163.

people with flowers in their hair celebrating peace and love. It also provided for the blueprint for future rock festivals.

Furthermore, the event marks the end of the Haight Ashbury culture as subculture and the beginning of the commercialized counterculture. Moreover, even though the SF bands were skeptical of big business, they were ready to cope with their “old enemy” and land solid record deals.<sup>186</sup> Monterey gave the participating SF bands and others a once-in-a-lifetime chance to actually make a living from their music. Interest in the bands spread further at the Summer of Love event, in Haight Ashbury later in the summer of 1967. The influence of the mass media and the interest of the large record companies in the bands commercialized both the bands and their audience. “Hippie” was by now a term covering every young person around Haight Ashbury and beyond with long hair and a distinct way of dressing.

The festival laid the foundation for rock music as commercial popular music as even, psychedelic songs hit the charts in 1967. Just as important, the development of the SF bands and scene reveals how popular culture often derives from underground popularity within subcultures that in the end welcome big business. Last, but just as important, the festival was responsible for how the movement spread beyond San Francisco and the USA. I asked Kaukonen about the importance of the festival:

*As for Monterey, it was the first festival to treat Rock as a real musical art form such as Jazz and Classical Music. It looks small*

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<sup>186</sup> Sculatti and Seay, p 163.

*in the film[documentary] today, but it was really a big deal back then.*<sup>187</sup>

Scott McKenzie had a clear message in the song “San Francisco (be sure to wear some flowers in your hair)”, which was released as a single on June 10, 1967,

*If you're going to San Francisco  
Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair  
If you're going to San Francisco  
You're gonna meet some gentle people there*

John Phillips wrote the song and also acted as co-producer with Lou Adler. With the words: “...For those who go to San Francisco, summertime will be a love-in there”, the song served as the ultimate advertisement for the Monterey International Pop Festival later that summer. The song reached #4 in the charts and became an instant hit.<sup>188</sup> It is an apt example of how the San Francisco bohemians were reduced to mere objects of big business which left all their values and beliefs behind, soon also to be altered by the hippies. Phillips and Adler reduced the whole SF music and culture scene to a sales gimmick intended to promote for the festival. Monterey served as a bait for the then unknown SF artists who Phillips and his associates sought to profit on. It was convenient to wrap the festival in slogans of peace and love and to let it float on the spirit of the time. Many of the SF artists had a bad taste about what they called “L.A commercialism”.

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<sup>187</sup> Email interview Sept. 30, 2005.

<sup>188</sup> Gary Hartmann, <http://www.scottmckenzie.iinet.net.au/mckenzie3.htm>, Revised March 23, 2005, read March 23, 2005.

Country Joe expressed what he thought about Monterey at the time as, “a total ethical sellout of everything we ever dreamed of.”<sup>189</sup>

Chester Anderson wrote the following about what he called “the hip merchants” in April 1967,

*The psych merchants are shit... they are the System, playing the System's games in the System's way... They're only interested in themselves, money and each other. In that order and in absolutely nothing else.*<sup>190</sup>

Anderson here refers to the drug dealers who were starting to be visible in Haight Ashbury, but his arguments fit any capitalist-minded person, who regardless of values and other people, seeks profit. Profits were not related to the lifestyle of the original Haight Ashbury's migrants, many of them artists and musicians.

While the SF scene did not disappear after Monterey, it was no longer “underground”, and it is hard to avoid the feeling that capitalism and media hype tend to destroy some the distinguishing features of a band. Janis Joplin attracted great fame after Monterey and later split with her first band, Big Brother and the Holding Company, to form another band. She was a Texas girl unfamiliar to all the attention she all of a sudden enjoyed. She was once a “folkie” (folk singer), and her stardom made her a diva. Janis died only 27 years old from a heroin overdose. Her story is not unique. The ambiguity towards fame and fortune as opposed to making high-quality records did influence the bands and their music.

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<sup>189</sup> Barney Hoskyns “The Meeting of the Twain: Monterey and the great California divide,” p 46 Monterey DVD box set taken from *His Waiting for the Sun: Strange Days, Weird Scenes and the Sound of Los Angeles*. 1996.

<sup>190</sup> Chester Anderson, Haight Ashbury Collection April 4, 1967.

Perhaps the greatest commercial success to come out of the Haight area was Jefferson Airplane. They serve as a good example of the ambiguity of their roles as authentic spokespersons for the SF music versus being rock-stars. As argued by Braunstein et.al they went

*back-and-forth between their roles as rock sirens extolling the wonders of the psychedelic experience in 'White Rabbit' and as celebrity pitchmen for White Levi Jeans.*<sup>191</sup>

With their new position of fame the band had also become a product the very moment their music became available for the mass market that sold other products, such as Levi's, and the band members did not refuse the benefits such offers gave them. The line between creativity and commerce had become blurred, or, as Paul Kantner of the Jefferson Airplane put it, "We were just another refrigerator, only with paisley on it, as far as the music industry was concerned".<sup>192</sup> I asked Kaukonen about his thoughts concerning his band being "sellouts", and whether this destroyed their authenticity:

*...the second word in music business is 'business.' This is not a bad thing I say from the vantage point of being 64 years old... you have to eat. The Jefferson Airplane and some of the other SF bands like the Grateful Dead and Big Brother were very successful. What does this mean?*<sup>193</sup>

His last question there deserves a comment. The dream of most musicians was, and still is, to make a living from their music. It is a great difference between selling your soul and giving the record company all responsibility as opposed to still doing things your way, with the help from a record company. Or, in Kaukonen's own words:

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<sup>191</sup> Braunstein et al., p 18.

<sup>192</sup> Sculatti and Seay, p 180.

<sup>193</sup> Email interview, Aug. 9, 2005.

*The Jefferson Airplane always wanted to be a commercial success... with integrity. As a young artist, I think it was difficult to actually see the issues of commercialization and integrity. Hmmm... wisdom with age? Who knows?*

Country Joe who at first harshly rejected the commercial aspects of the SF music scene that made people like Phillips and Adler profit, later revised his opinions and confessed that, to be a “sellout” was “something we desperately needed because we were totally isolated”.<sup>194</sup> Wenner argued that the SF bands were authentic for the mere reason that they were not world famous and familiar with all sorts of studio devices in addition to the notion of how the sound was also the scene, as *Time* put it. The transformation from locally known bands to international stars marks the end of the SF Sound as an authentic underground phenomenon. In the end, most of the bands growing out of the San Francisco scene “sold out” to big business corporations. They sold out in the sense that they signed a record deal and became overpowered by a manager who eventually erased the perceived flaws and faults that had made the band authentic and different in the first place.

With success, ideals often change. Media coverage resulted in thousands of dropouts flocking to Haight Ashbury without having a place to live or any money. An idealistic world vision based on romanticism and community appealed to many people, and this was how journalists first defined the Haight Ashbury community. The media discovered the San Francisco scene at the peak of its cultural flowering and came to be responsible for the scene’s downfall, both musically and culturally. The hippie lifestyle

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<sup>194</sup> Hoskyns, p 46.

and values became targets of “hip” consumerism and big business. As co-founder of *the San Francisco Oracle* Allen Cohen argues: “Peace and love weren’t just slogans but states of mind and experiences that we were living and bearing witness to”.<sup>195</sup> To some, such slogans merely expressed that they were with the in-crowd and did not relate to the hippie lifestyle other than as a fashion. In a way, the hippies themselves were responsible for the outcome of their lifestyle.

Events such as the Human Be-In in January 1967 and the Summer of Love the same year (organized by a council of people with Allen Ginsberg among others) first grabbed the interest of people in what was happening in San Francisco - including journalists. Headings like “Open Up, Tune In, Turn On,” “Going to Pot”, and pictures of beautiful women dancing with beads and flowers in their hair, spread the gospel of a peaceful hippie movement as the summer approached.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Music is an essential part of the cultural and social history of a decade. Each era has its dominating type of music, and just as with buildings and fashion, music changes with the decade. Simon Frith wisely argues, “Rock is the result of an ever-changing combination of independently developed musical elements each of which comes with its own cultural message”.<sup>196</sup> To hippies and bohemians, music created community and the feeling of being separated from the mainstream culture with their own kind of music. From the

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<sup>195</sup> Allen Cohen, <http://rockument.com/sumlove.html> , read March 24, 2006.

<sup>196</sup> Frith, 1981, p 15.

start, the SF Sound was noticed by local writers who wrote about the atmosphere they felt at shows and in the neighborhood in general. The music was referred to in newspaper articles and magazines as “new” and “different”, which reveals that the area had something special in the eyes of spectators. The Monterey International Pop Festival laid the foundation for the SF rock as popular music and must be seen as more or less responsible, along with the Summer of Love, for the commercialization of the Haight Ashbury culture. It is a paradox that the events that laid the backdrop to the commercialization of the subculture were people who lived in the Haight Ashbury themselves. They wanted to spread the gospel of a lifestyle they believed was a better solution than that of mainstream America.

Local musicians attained national fame after the music festival and left behind a life lived sparsely for fame and fortune. Their lifestyle had become fashionable. Suddenly it was hip to be a hippie and a dropout. The hippie no longer had the meaning the media first gave it. Thousands of people left their hometown for San Francisco to live out the media-painted glory of hippie life. By the end of 1967, what was left of the once peaceful community was merely drugs and crime.



## 5.0 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to find the origins of the counterculture through subcultural styles, more specifically through the rock music in the 1960s Haight Ashbury underground culture. I have wanted to show that the counterculture was founded upon principles only vaguely reflecting the Haight Ashbury subculture through music, arts, fashion and choice of drugs. A basic argument throughout has been how popular cultures evolve from subcultures, and that the counterculture starting in 1967 was very much inspired by the Haight Ashbury underground culture of artists, old beatniks, and musicians. The shape American individualism had taken during the postwar era is seen as an essential explanation for why many of the baby boom generation sought alternative value systems expressed through a radical lifestyle and an expressive individualism.

By concentrating my focus on the specific music coming from the subculture of Haight Ashbury and the sort of people who lived there, I have conveyed that the bohemians' way of life had little to do with the counterculture starting in 1967, other than giving the counterculture its external shape. Old newspaper articles and interviews with some of the Haight Ashbury musicians and local inhabitants reveal skepticism about the young people they saw as infiltrating their culture. By the end of the summer of 1967, many bohemians seem to have given up a life based on the principles of love and community. As a result, the baby boomers flocking the area were seen as naïve “outsiders” interpreting the culture differently from the “insiders” and responsible for destroying the uniqueness of the Haight Ashbury subculture.

Moreover, by coming to San Francisco in great numbers, young baby boomers attracted the mass media's attention that soon found great interest in portraying the hippies, either as flower children or LSD junkies - or both. Big business saw a massive market potential in youths' way of life, and contributed to commercialize the products of the subculture to popular culture by the summer of 1967 and onwards. The focus placed on Haight Ashbury in old newspaper and magazine writing has revealed a glorified picture of a community in harmony with itself, with an own kind of art, fashion, music, and drugs. The mythical depiction provided the means for baby boomers to vividly express their frustration towards the parent generation. Many chose to adopt the lifestyle of former beatniks and folk musicians, either as part time dropouts or by arriving at Haight Ashbury with two empty hands, hoping to be taken care of by local inhabitants.

Based on my sources, I argue that the original Haight Ashbury inhabitants were not part of the counterculture of the 1960, but rather served as role models for a counterculture some scholars have tended to depict as one homogenous period, starting in 1967 and ending in the early 1970s. In my discussion of the social and cultural life that penetrated the popular culture of the period, I have along with Peter Braunstein et al. divided the 1960s into two phases. By separating the cultural flowering of the 1960s into two phases, 1964/1965-1967 and 1968-1970, it also becomes apparent that the musicians were ready to commercialize, and the Monterey International Pop Festival provided that opportunity. As Jorma Kaukonen of Jefferson Airplane admits,

*The Jefferson Airplane always wanted to be a commercial success... with integrity. As a young artist, I think it was difficult to actually see the issues of commercialization and integrity.*<sup>197</sup>

Even though being highly skeptical at the time, also Country Joe later had to acknowledge that the notion of selling out to big business was something they needed in order to make a living from the music.<sup>198</sup>

Although established institutions in the local community such as the Haight Ashbury newspaper *the San Francisco Oracle* and the Diggers, a group of idealists who distributed free clothes and food to local people, were founded upon the belief that a changing of American standards was necessary, several of the local inhabitants soon saw that they could not change society for the better. By the autumn of 1967, a lot of the original inhabitants had left Haight Ashbury because of the commercialization that the younger hippies brought with them. A funeral signifying the death of the hippie held in October 1967 by some remaining bohemians most strongly demonstrated these changes.

Focusing on music as a cultural expression, my intentions have been to explain that the change from local subculture into counterculture was really a transformation from subculture to popular culture. The values and lifestyle of a few were transformed into a popular culture that reflected little or nothing of the original values of the Haight Ashbury bohemians. Moreover, as newspaper articles and email interviews have revealed, most people in the area were comfortable with the changes. They were ready to earn money and for a regular life as a tax paying citizen with a job and family.

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<sup>197</sup> Email interview, Sept.30, 2005.

<sup>198</sup> Barney Hoskins, "the meeting of the 'twain: Monterey and the great California divide". Pamphlet in the Monterey DVD box set. 2003.

The Summer of Love event in 1967 also attracted great focus on San Francisco and Haight Ashbury. Although Allen Ginsberg and his friends first and foremost wanted to spread the gospel of love, they also created a profitable event for people in the area who had opened shops selling hippie goods. With the sudden interest in the area by outsiders, many locals took advantage of the possibilities to gain from their work, and hippie shops soon became characteristic of Haight Ashbury. Thus, the insiders must also be seen as partly responsible, along with the media coverage, for changing the contents of their culture to popular culture. Marty Balin of Jefferson Airplane sums up the power of the media and what it did to the scene in Haight Ashbury:

*I remember it was really pretty and beautiful for a year or two and then Time Magazine came out and they were interviewing me. I told the guy, 'it's great that you're publicizing this beautiful-feeling scene out here,' and he looked at me right in the eye and said, 'fastest way to kill it.'*<sup>199</sup>

Music is an essential tool in the process of “standing out” from the mainstream. The meaning of music as a subcultural expression and form within an underground culture are based on Hebdige’s theories of how subcultures are formed and how they create conformity with their expressive “meaning of style.” Subcultures are shaped by young people’s protest against contemporary society in one way or another, and always include music, art and fashion that serve to mirror the values and concerns of an underground culture. Moreover, these “stylistic innovations” first attract the attention of the media, as was the case with the Haight Ashbury culture. Through a distinct style and music, the

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<sup>199</sup> Jeff Tamarkin, *Relix Magazine*, April, 1993, found at <http://www.Jeffersonairplane.com>, read March 24, 2006.

Haight Ashbury people and their followers created trends that were quickly taken advantage of by big business. As Hebdige argues,

*...the creation and diffusion of new styles is inextricably bound up with the process of production, publicity and packaging which must inevitably lead to the defusion of the subculture's subversive power...*<sup>200</sup>

The term “homology” applied to subcultures describes the “symbolic fit between the values and lifestyle of a group, its subjective experience and the musical forms it uses to express or reinforce its focal concerns.”<sup>201</sup> The Haight Ashbury bohemians’ and the hippies’ expressive style of individualism, displayed in clothes, choice of music, hairdos, and in many cases drug use, created a homology similar to that of the dominant American culture.

The people who constituted the subculture had a value system that originally expressed a frustration towards society and put more weight on love and community than the dominant American culture. Moreover, the local rock bands and the use of drugs further contributed to coherence and a unity. The hippie way of life created a radical conformity and mirrored the dominant culture through a set of values contrary to the values of the dominant culture. The original Haight Ashbury bohemians also shared a language that gave little room for individual differences or fulfillment. It was a collective way of life that in the larger counterculture manifested itself as being discriminating in its shape.

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<sup>200</sup> Hebdige, p 95.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p 113.

Members of subcultures function as trend setters, and in their effort to stand out, their appearance, fashion and music “feed back into the appropriate industries”.<sup>202</sup> The Monterey International Pop Festival most clearly demonstrates this through its concept as a pop(ular) festival claiming popularity of the Haight Ashbury musicians outside the borders of California. The festival organizers deliberately presented the as yet unknown San Francisco bands as remarkable in the promotion of the festival. One of the organizers, John Phillips, wrote a song about San Francisco to create interest for the area in advance and to make the audience believe that the festival also celebrated peace and love. The song served as an invitation for people to go to San Francisco and manifested the media created idea of hippies as “people with flowers in their hair”.

The media-created hippie myth had become alive by the summer of 1967. Suddenly it was hip to be a hippie and a “drop out”, and the music festival helped to promote this realization, first nationally and then internationally. The music festival laid the foundation for the San Francisco rock as popular music and must be seen as more or less responsible, along with the ambivalent interest of the media and many baby boomers, for the commercialization of the Haight Ashbury culture. Local musicians attained national fame after the music festival and left behind a life lived sparsely, for fame and fortune.

It would be interesting to further explore what became of the San Francisco music scene after its commercialization, and also to do a comparison between the Monterey International Pop Festival and the Woodstock music festival in 1969. I believe a

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<sup>202</sup> Hebdige, p 95.

comparison would give interesting results as far as big business is concerned, but this task is left for others to fulfill.

Throughout my thesis, the changing content of the subculture has been related to a sociological point of view, as I have referred to the changing American individualism to explain how and why the counterculture developed. I believe the focus on the distinct music and the musicians of Haight Ashbury has enabled me to present an alternative solution to the great hype and popularity that the counterculture brought along.

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## APPENDIX

### Email correspondence with Jorma Kaukonen

Fra: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>

Svar til: hillsongfarm@earthlink.net

Sendt: 3. april 2005 06:24:03

Til: monicaliberg@hotmail.com

Emne: S.F. sound

*I am a graduate student of North American studies from Norway writing about the San Francisco Sound of the Sixties in which Jefferson Airplane was essential. Would it be possible to ask you Mr Kaukonen a few questions about your role in developing the so distinct sound? It would really be helpful to my thesis work to get advice from an authentic source :)*

*so if you could help me out, my question would be the following:*

*what would you say characterize the San Francisco Sound, I mean what were the changes to the sound from regular rock of the time? Another thing, if you could define psychedelia how would you do that?*

*Grateful Dead's sound man, "the Bear" told me that the SF sound and psychedelia are only vaguely related, I thought the SF bands created psychedelia... am I wrong or is "the Bear" too picky????*

*Again, if you could be so nice to answer these questions I would really be a big smile for a long time :) :)*

*thank you :)*

Dear Monica

Jorma here. Good questions... I'm not sure there are any satisfactory answers. Anyway, here goes:

The San Francisco bands such as Jefferson Airplane (my band) and others tended not to follow the three minute songwriting formulas successfully used by commercial songwriters for years... The subject matter was more diverse also, reflecting actual social changes. Musically speaking, the S.F. bands were not as technically 'slick' so there were always exciting precipices occurring not only in live performances but also in recordings. The psychedelic sound of the time tended to center around guitar tricks, but not always. The guitar sounds of the era have become a genre today and almost ever rock and roll kid playing knows how to get them. At the time, it was all quite new.

Bear may be right... He is picky, but he is also frequently right. The San Francisco Sound was culturally oriented and of course, psychedelia was an important part of that. However, psychedelics were also happening in England, and the various sound there were completely different. What does this all mean? I really don't know, but I would be interested in some of your conclusions if you have time. Looking at what i have written, it doesn't seem completely satisfying, but it makes sense from my view point.

Jorma (in Italy right now)

Fra: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>  
Svar til: hillsongfarm@earthlink.net  
Sendt: 1. august 2005 14:33:13  
Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>  
Emne: RE: S.F. sound

Dear Monica

The individualism angle is a good one. I was just doing an interview with a guy and we were talking about how the San Francisco musicians were not fettered by preconceived notions of sound and the same way that some of the East Coast academicians were. Many of my East Coast pals were still studying the 'masters' of traditional music whereas the West Coast sidestepped that early and just began to create. That is my take on it anyway. What do you think?

jorma

Fra: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>  
Svar til: hillsongfarm@earthlink.net  
Sendt: 9. august 2005 13:51:45  
Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>  
Emne: RE: S.F. sound

hi

*I agree with your last comment there.. And I will bear that in mind in the writing process!*

*Right now I am trying to work out how capitalism expanded the SF scene and to some extent destroyed its authenticity on the way. Thinking about it, there are so many factors behind the SF scene and I must define terms such as "underground" and also explain how underground most often ends up as mainstream (popular culture) in the end- due to capitalism...*

*and of course link it to individualism at the same time.*

*I read somewhere that your band were contributing in a Levi's commercial in the late 60s and that some "purists" considered J.A sell outs because of this... Would you say that money destroyed your band's authenticity or even the whole SF scene in the end? and that this cannot really be avoided?*

*From my angle it seems that every band that turns from small to big always ends up as victims of big business - because selling albums is after all a musicians' way of making a living.???*

Your last sentence says it all... the second word in music business is 'business.' This is not a bad thing I say from the vantage point of being 64 years old... you have to eat. The Jefferson Airplane and some of the other SF bands like the Grateful Dead and Big Brother were very successful. What does this mean?

I'm not sure...

More later

Jorma

Fra: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>

Svar til: hillsongfarm@earthlink.net

Sendt: 30. september 2005 16:08:16

Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: RE: S.F. sound

Dear Monica

The Jefferson Airplane always wanted to be a commercial success... with integrity. As a young artist, I think it was difficult to actually see the issues of commercialization and integrity. Hmmm... wisdom with age? Who knows? As for Monterey, it was the first festival to treat Rock as a real musical art form such as Jazz and Classical Music. It looks small in the film today, but it was really a big deal back then.

Hope this helps some

Your friend

Jorma

Fra: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>

Svar til: Jorma Kaukonen <hillsongfarm@earthlink.net>

Sendt: 20. januar 2006 20:48:50

Til: monica liberg <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: Re: happy new year

*Hi there and happy new year!*

*Till now I have had great use of your thoughts and comments to my questions. I am in the finishing phase of my thesis and have to clarify a few things before I can hand in in late April. One of the things my tutor wanted me to define was what I mean by the term "authenticity" in connection with the SF Sound. I have read many different definitions of the term, but it would be much more interesting to hear your definition of authenticity in relation to the music you and your friends created in the 1960s. Could you help me with that one?*

*I promise you this will be my last question :) and I will be more than glad to send you a copy of my thesis either by mail or email when I am entirely done with it.*

*again, Thank you*

Hejsan Monica

An interesting question. I remember a conversation the Jerry Garcia, Janice Joplin and I had back in the mid 60's about 'authenticity.' Still looking at ourselves in the light of our ongoing interest in traditional music we wondered how long it would take until we would be considered 'authentic.' Jerry posited that if we stayed alive long enough we would become archetypes and in an odd way, I think that time has proved him right. Perhaps longevity is the answer to you question. What do you think? And by the way...

god nytt ar to you too!



## Email correspondence with the Bear

Fra: Bear <bear@thebear.org>  
Sendt: 31. mars 2005 00:14:04  
Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>  
Emne: Re: haight ashbury the beginning of psychedelia!?

Hello there

*I am a master degree student of North American studies and have chosen to write my thesis on the San Fransisco Sound of the 1960s, or psychedelia if you like.*

I am most likely responsible for all the music sound you hear today, since I built the world's first true, dedicated music sound reinforcement system for Grateful Dead in 1966. Read my website essays. Psychedelia and the SF music are two entirely different subjects and are only peripherally related. If you are really interested in any aspect of the psychedelics era you MUST partake of the 'drugs'. Literally- it is impossible to make any sense out of any of it, it is like a blind person trying to understand colour, light and shadow. If this not possible for you, I strongly advise choosing another subject for your thesis. Even the music does not make any sense unless you can get high and listen to it.

*I am trying to highlight that the sixties sound that bands like Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe, Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin pioneered ,would not have sounded the way they do without the drugs. How essential were the drugs do you think? and what did the drugs do to the music more specifically?*

Absolutely essential. Acid, mescaline/peyote psilocybin mushrooms and cannabis. Janis' band dropped acid and smoked pot, she was just a drunk- only later she became a junkie, which killed her.

*I would be delighted if you could help me out and answer this since you yourself lived in Haight Ashbury at a time when it all began!*

Sorry to disappoint, but I have never lived anywhere in SF, only nearby in the East Bay and Marin. I do not live in the US any more.

--

Cheers,

Bear

Fra: Bear <bear@thebear.org>  
Sendt: 1. april 2005 04:32:32  
Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>  
Emne: Re: haight ashbury the beginning of psychedelia!?

Simple. The music was its own scene, and the greater psychedelic scene its own, they were not the same although there were certain minor congruencies here and there. I cannot 'tell' you anything about this, anymore than I can explain colour to a blindman or music to the deaf... it is the reason- you can't write about it unless you get high. Actually you can write, only it will be fiction- if that will get you your degree, so be it. But it won't be the truth. This may not be important for you.

What do you mean by the indefinite statement "I do know how it is to get high" mean? Most people would say something like: "I've taken strong hits of acid" or "I have smoked

a lot of good grass", even if they are not doing so at the current time- your statement reads like a weasel-out-of-it meaning you are speaking metaphorically- not literally. I

--

Cheers,

Bear

Fra: Bear <bear@thebear.org>

Sendt: 2. april 2005 02:01:38

Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: Re: haight ashbury the beginning of psychedelia

HI

*ok, but could you give examples of any psychedelic bands then? Jefferson Airplane is seen as the first of the SF psychedelic bands to get a song on the charts.. white rabbit...they were both part of the SF scene and part of psychedelia ,I thought..*

All the SF bands were psychedelic- the first one was the Charlatans.

*I understand what you mean about getting high in order to understand the music, but my aim is not to find any deeper understanding in the music but rather to enlighten its importance for popular culture and to link the movement to american individualism....*

Sorry, you can't relate to ANY aspect of the psychedelics without taking them- full stop. Music is not the issue.

What your statement above says to me is that psychedelics and the culture they produced and supported- around, as well as in the music- is not important to you and only a raft of words on paper, meaningless or not in real terms, is what you are after.

*I am very fascinated by the 60s , especially the music and fashion :)*

Of course you - most things you cannot understand are fascinating.

--

Cheers,

Bear

Fra: Bear <bear@thebear.org>

Sendt: 3. april 2005 00:04:44

Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: Re: haight ashbury the beginning of psychedelia!?

*Hi*

*thank you for your help.*

*the 1960s counterculture IS very important to me as an academic AND to cultural history. I do not agree that I do not understand the music or the culture. I listen to the music from this decade nearly every day and I have further read most books on the subject. I have also recently been in SF in order to find out more about the movement in first hand sources such as the S.F Oracle.*

*The bands should be happy that it is possible to enjoy their music without drugs, if not they would not have sold any cds today..... :)*

I never said anything of the sort. You onot have to hear and understand everything, or even more than 10% of good music to enjoy and buy it. Acid doesnot define the music of het 60's which if your reading comprehension was up to snuff you would know I have said as much already. How many Americans, for instance, can follow the lyrics in Wagner? But albums of operatic works, virtually all of which are in foreign tongues, sell quite well.

*far too little is written on the subject of innovative bands and persons that operated in SF during the sixties... my aim is to write about something I find important and I believe I have found the right subject for me - whether or not I chose to get high during the writing process.*

*of course, I am only 25 and did not live to experience the movement myself and only those who did will fully understand what it was really about.. so you are lucky to have been part of it. we others can only read about it .*

That is why you may write something about it... but not the truth. It is a waste of your precious time as a huge amount of such writing already abounds. Of course at 25, time means nothing. I'm 70.

--

Cheers,

Bear

## Email correspondence with Country Joe

Fra: joe <joe@countryjoe.com>

Sendt: 28. januar 2005 22:03:32

Til: "monica liberg" <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: Re: oslo calling

questions for Joe McDonald by Monica Liberg, November 2004-10-2

*Could you define the San Francisco Sound and what elements were essential in shaping/developing it?*

It was electric.....not acoustic....and very folk and blues and traditional based for the most part.

*What is included in the change from folk-rock to acid rock? Is there a change of beat and chords? Any new instruments used?*

Well the most important thing is that no acoustic instruments were used in acid rock pretty much aside from that it was the same instruments. It got louder.

*How important were the Family Dog and people like Bill Graham for the San Francisco music scene?*

They made it possible to play regularly and developed a sound and audience

*What did LSD do to the sound, and how did LSD influence lyrics and the band in general?*

I cant say how it changed the sound. Probably made weird things possible. It influenced the lyrics by adding the element of drug lyrics...about drugs and drug experiences

*How would you define psychedelia, what elements were to it?*

I cant .

*How about the social and political status quo concerning poverty, the war- how did you feel at the time.*

We were all very aware of the war and protest. It was all around us.

*Could you clarify the ideology behind your music? Has it changed during the years, how?*

It is working class not upper class. It has not changed much over the years. It should be enjoyed by working people

*How come your band split, and did you all have such strong political beliefs as you had?*

We all shared liberal views and we split for a lot of different reasons

*Reading about the era there is a lot written about the youth's disaffection of their parents' way of living and their simple view on life (enough money equals with a happy life). Did such concerns go for you at the time as well? What engaged you?*

I did not really disagree with my parents' views as they were very left wing. I did have a different social view as I was a hippy . This was different than many others.

*Which artist or artists were your major inspirations at the time you got into a band and how important was your folk background to the outcome of your band's music?*

Bob Dylan was the biggest influence on me to write songs and play in an electric band.

We pretty much left the folk music behind

*Did your musical inspirations come to show in the music?*

Yes I tried to use it all

*Dylan or Beatles? Or both as essential to people getting into bands?*

Dylan

*How influential would you say the Charlatans were to the S.F Sound as some journalists claim they were the first psychedelic band?*

I don't know

*When you got a record deal, what happened, did you get to keep your autonomy from the record label or did they have a lot to say to the outcome of your records?*

I don't really know It seemed like we did what we wanted

*How important was the media in shaping and harming of the SF Sound?*

They attracted some attention to it but lots of it was word of mouth

*Why San Francisco, why then? What is left today?*

I cant say why SF. We still have a pretty active scene.

*Looking back, how do you view your work? Is there anything you would have changed?*

I think I did a pretty good job of writing songs and being a band leader. I would have tried harder to keep the Country Joe and The Fish band together and taken less drugs and

booze.

*What of the legacy would you pass down to your kids from this part of your life?*

try to enjoy yourself and do no harm to the world or yourself and plan for the future

*How did your political ideology change when you became internationally known? Do you have the same beliefs today?*

I don't know what it would take but movements are happening all the time in the world somewhere. My ideology did not change much I have pretty much the same beliefs today except that I try to emphasize the global aspect as we are now much more a world community than a national community.



## **Email correspondence with Steven Palmer**

Fra: Steven Palmer <hashburysp@yahoo.com>

Sendt: 30. september 2005 03:55:46

Til: monica liberg <monicaliberg@hotmail.com>

Emne: Re: hello from a student in Oslo

Monica:

Good lord, I could spend the next three weeks filling you in on this subject since I am an archivist on the Haight-Ashbury and the counterculture in America. I'm not sure where to begin. I imagine you have a comprehensive reading list and video/dvd list. I might be able to give you more resources. Let me know what you're bibliography is.

Remember, the reality of the sixties is multi-dimensional and the dovetailing of several factors all play prominently into the birth of the counterculture. This includes the civil rights movement, the war in vietnam, the beatniks who were the predecessors to the hippies, the residue of post-world war II America and the lockstep fear of the the cold-war, affluence for some americans, and of course, LSD.

When considering the Haight on a practical level, it's where several artists and Beatniks moved in the early 1960s when the cops forced them out of the North Beach section of San Francisco which had also become overrun with tourists. The rents in the Haight were cheap and it was a very mixed neighborhood. It was close to the University and to lovely Golden Gate Park. Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters were down the Peninsula in Palo Alto already using LSD which was making its way into SF. The psychedelic sound of the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Big Brother, etc., was the tantric music of the time. It helped kids move beyond themselves, literally. When you dance to music in an

ecstatic state, it feels like your own physical molecules are shedding or expanding, moving against the constraints of your physical body. It changes your perception. You realize that reality is relative. It just depends on the angle you're looking at it from. And that experience allowed people to realize that there were options of how one might conduct or live their lives. Options are plenty. And this was important because 1950's America was very repressed. I don't mean to be judgemental because the population had suffered the depression and World War II, but stability and security were key and conformity was the way to get there. Conformity to many people equalled peace. But the effect was chilling on the baby boom generation who viewed the status quo as death. Clearly hypocrisy abounded. When you add the puritanical strains of the USA, you get a very repressive atmosphere. And there were the McCarthy witch trials (communist hunting). Free speech was considered subversive. A real ugly time.

I'm not sure what to say about individualism vs. collectivism as a result of the music. I think it is fair to say that it enhanced both. People felt that when they gave up the American ideal which had translated into stifling conformity, they were finding out who they really were. Pot helped that as well because its disinhibiting effect allowed people to loosen up their uptight personalities and let things flow more. LSD blew it into another dimension. And the music was important because people grooved and danced their hearts out. So they really had experiences that allowed them to experience their individuality as they had never before. But then there was the common bonds of the times that played into a more collectivistic approach. "We can be together" sang the Jefferson Airplane. People's inner explorations also led them to find their commonalities. And because they had decided that competition was evil, there was a natural tendency to disband American ethos and to work cooperatively. LSD really can help you see the oneness of people and that was very important to the hippie ethos.

It's late and I'm rambling. Sometimes the sheer volume of information I have on the time lends itself to a jumble of tangential thoughts. So if that's what you read from the above, I apologize.

It's interesting to hear that the American hippie period still resonates worldwide. I'm so disgusted with this country at this point that I can hardly believe we ever had anything good to offer. How does this period interest you?

Steven